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is there life after
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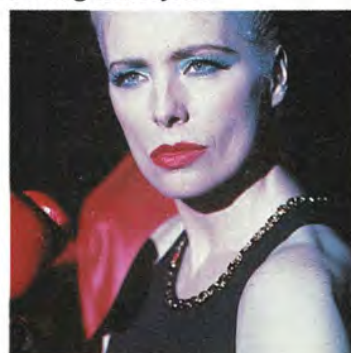
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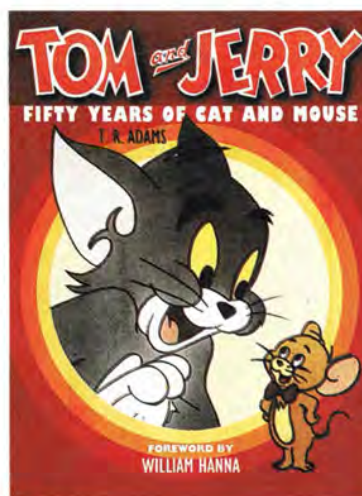
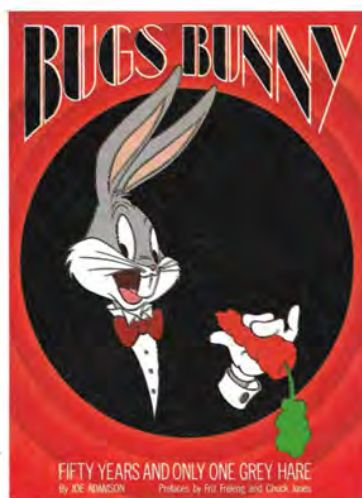
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Popular rules

Contributors to this issue

Farrah Anwar specialises in censorship and the cinema
Peter Biskind is executive editor of *Premiere*
Geoff Brown is film critic of *The Times*
John Caughie is head of the Department of Theatre, Film and Television, University of Glasgow
David Caute is a novelist and author of a forthcoming biography of Joseph Losey
Michael Chanan is working on a book about film music
Andrew Clifford has written on television for numerous publications including *The Guardian*
Lizzie Francke is writing a book on women screenwriters
Paul Gilroy is the author of *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*
Mamoun Hassan is a writer, teacher and director
J. Hoberman is a film critic; a selection of his criticism will shortly be published in book form
Alf Louvre has co-edited a book on culture and the Vietnam war
Angela McRobbie has contributed to numerous books on popular culture
Michael O'Pray is writing a book on Derek Jarman
John Powers is film critic of *LA Weekly*
Mark Winokur contributed to *The Invention of Ethnicity* and is writing a book on ethnicity and cinema

Cop films and mob films seem as popular as ever – and not only with audiences. For example, women are increasingly adding themselves to the predictable list of male practitioners of these genres. With a recognition of how the powerfully gendered conventions of the genres can be unsettled, Kathryn Bigelow in *Blue Steel* and the writer Linda La Plante in the television series *Widows* have moved into, respectively, the cop and the gangster film. Jonathan Demme's *Married to the Mob* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, both of which play with our expectations of gender, simply confirm how available are the genres to be used for new purposes. Ethnicity may seem a rather more traditional stomping ground for cops and mobs, but even here it is interesting to see the directions in which the genres are being taken. The next film of Doris Dorrie, whom we interview in a future number, is a cop movie centred on ethnic conflict in Germany; and *Homicide*, the film by David Mamet featured in this issue, uses the form to explore ethnic tensions in the US.

Not that there is anything new in the fascination of intellectuals with popular forms, as the current National Theatre production of Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, a play about Hitler told as a story of Chicago gangsters, reminds us. It might well be possible to argue that Europeans have always been the ones most in love with US popular cultural forms. Indigenous popular genres have been thin on the ground in Britain lately, but the release of Alan Parker's *The Commitments* and Peter Medak's recent

The Krays do at least remind us of the vigour of the 'crime' movie and of the rock and roll film.

But to say all this is to leave open the question of how these particular popular genres or indeed 'the popular' should be approached. Working within popular genres isn't easy – they have their own disciplines and difficulties, as Linda La Plante explained at this year's Edinburgh Television Festival. And Andrew Clifford's argument in this issue about the 'genrification' of the recent BBC *Screen One* series of films, suggests the limitation of directors who work with popular genres only to show a snuffy superiority to them. On the other hand, Paul Gilroy's account of Spike Lee's simplistic, populist stance warns us that there is no necessary virtue in embracing the popular.

The dash towards the popular could, of course, have other consequences. The emergence of a popular black gangster idiom in films such as *Boyz n the Hood* and *New Jack City* (both touched on in Mark Winokur's argument) may mean that other new black film-makers with a more complex aesthetic will be judged against the popular, found wanting, and not be given the exposure and distribution they need. Celebration of the richness and variety within popular forms should not be used as an excuse for ignoring work that is forged within a different and perhaps more adventurous aesthetic. That is at least one of the implications of the arguments put forward by the two contributors who meditate on the singular achievement of Bill Douglas.

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James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



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001



Trop Belle Pour Toi

(Too Beautiful For You)

A film by Bertrand Blier

'One of the most sheerly entertaining French films of the year' Derek Malcolm, The Guardian

Gérard Depardieu/Josiane Balasko/Carole Bouquet

France 1989

French with English subtitles

HiFi Stereo Mono compatible

Widescreen

Certificate 18

007



Leningrad Cowboys Go America

A film by Aki Kaurismäki

'Wildly amusing... hilarious' Ben Thompson, NME

Finland/Sweden 1989

English original version/
some subtitles

HiFi stereo Mono compatible

Certificate 15

013



Fanny and Alexander

A film by Ingmar Bergman

'Glowing, magnificent, enchanting' Philip French, The Observer

Sweden/France/
West Germany 1982

Swedish with English subtitles

Certificate 15

Double volume boxed set

002



An Angel at my Table

A film by Jane Campion

'An indisputable triumph' George Perry, The Sunday Times

New Zealand 1990

Certificate 15

008



Life and Nothing But

(La Vie et Rien d'Autre)

A film by Bertrand Tavernier

'Fascinating... classic film-making in the Jean de Florette tradition' Alexander Walker, Evening Standard

Philippe Noiret/Sabine Azéma

France 1989*

French with English subtitles

Widescreen

Certificate PG

014



Don Giovanni

Joseph Losey's film of Mozart's opera

'A matchless Don Giovanni... the most successful movie of its kind I have ever seen' Alexander Walker, Evening Standard

Ruggero Raimondi/Kiri Te Kanawa

France/Italy/West Germany 1979

Sung in Italian with English subtitles

HiFi Stereo Mono compatible

Certificate PG

003



Death in a French Garden

(Péril en la Demeure)

A film by Michel Deville

'A beautifully serpentine murder mystery, filled with deceit and visual luxuriance.' Tim Palleine, The Guardian

France 1985

French with English subtitles

Certificate 18

009



Tilai

(The Law)

A film by Idrissa Ouedraogo

'A film of remarkable accomplishment... fascinating' Wally Hammond, Time Out

Burkina Faso/Switzerland/
France 1990*

Burkinabé with English subtitles

Certificate PG

015



Cyrano de Bergerac

A film by Jean-Paul Rappeneau

'The performance of a lifetime... a thundering success' Geoff Brown, The Times

Gérard Depardieu

France 1990*

French with English subtitles

HiFi Stereo Mono compatible

Certificate U

004



L'Atalante

A film by Jean Vigo

'One of cinema's most bewitching films' Geoff Brown, *The Times*

France 1934

Black and white

French with English subtitles

Certificate PG

010



Night Sun

(Il sole anche di notte)

A film by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani

'Breathtakingly beautiful' Hugo Davenport, *The Daily Telegraph*

Julian Sands/Nastassja Kinski/Charlotte Gainsbourg

Italy/France/Germany 1990

Italian with English subtitles

HiFi Stereo Mono compatible

Certificate 15

016



Danton

A film by Andrzej Wajda

'Wajda's magnificent film... compelling, fiercely intelligent' Philip French, *The Observer*

Gérard Depardieu/Wojciech Pszoniak

France/Poland 1982

French with English subtitles

Certificate PG

Available in December

005



Golden Braid

A film by Paul Cox

'As much an erotic comedy as a disguised morality play... you should not miss' Derek Malcolm, *The Guardian*

Australia 1990

Certificate 15

011



Andrei Rublev

A film by Andrei Tarkovsky

'Towering... one of world cinema's most enthralling films' Geoff Brown, *The Times*

USSR 1966

Black and white, part colour

Russian with English subtitles

Widescreen

Certificate 15

017



A World Without Pity

(Un monde sans pitié)

A film by Eric Rochant

'Excellent feature debut... enormously witty and likeable... unalloyed pleasure' Geoff Andrew, *Time Out*

France 1989

French with English subtitles

Certificate 15

Available in December

006



The Garden

A film by Derek Jarman

'Matchless... Jarman is in a class of his own as a poet of the cinema' Derek Malcolm, *The Guardian*

UK 1990

HiFi Stereo Mono compatible

Certificate 15

012



Tales of the Four Seasons:

A Tale of Springtime

(Contes des Quatre Saisons: Conte de Printemps)

A film by Eric Rohmer

'Exquisite... acted with dazzling freshness' Nigel Andrews, *The Financial Times*

France 1989*

French with English subtitles

Certificate U

018



Passion

A film by Jean-Luc Godard

'Challenging... breath-stopping... a sublime marriage of sound and vision' David Thompson, *City Limits*

France/Switzerland 1982

French with English subtitles

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SS1

Alive again

John Powers

Each September, when family holidays have ended, cars again clog the freeways, puffs of smog circle the downtown skyscrapers like carcinogenic hula hoops and I, grumpily intoning Philip Glass' score for *Koyaanisqatsi*, jet off to cool, spruce Toronto for the Festival of Festivals. With its lavish government backing and open-hearted audiences, Toronto is the world's best run and friendliest major festival.

Still, the very generosity, liberal-mindedness and public funding that make this festival indispensable often make Canadian-produced films completely dispensable. Indeed, the national film industry shows the risks of depending too much on state support, with its clique-fed bureaucracies and hidden agendas.

Contempt

Wan and 'improving', Canadian movies too often seem to have been made by social workers. The country does, of course, have a renegade tradition and, like other foreign critics, I've tended to champion just the movies the local powers-that-be don't quite approve of: *Dead Ringers*, for instance, which left the opening night's jewel-spattered audience wearing their superegos like armour; or Winnipeg wild-boy Guy Maddin's *Tales from the Gimli Hospital*, which critics had to see on cassette since it had been left out of the 1988 festival – most likely because it scorned the high-minded values of Canada's governing film bodies.

This year's outlaw surprise came from Polish emigré Ricard Bugajski, who's evidently bidding to become Canada's right-wing answer to Oliver Stone. A luridly watchable hybrid of *Deliverance* and *Dances with Wolves*, *Clearcut* tells the story of a liberal-minded Toronto attorney who defends Indian lands against corporate foresters. After losing a big case, he falls in with an Indian terrorist who kidnaps the manager of the local timber company; soon, all three are debating the religious meaning of forests and the efficacy of violence, not to mention passing a delirious night during which the Indian lops off his own little finger to prove he means business.

With its potboiler plot and overwrought tone, *Clearcut* couldn't be less Canadian – which, I suspect, is almost the point. This film's real subtext is Bugajski's (unconscious?) contempt for his adoptive country's bloodless cinema and liberal naiveté: the movie's lawyer hero actually thinks he can talk out a satisfyingly rational compromise between racist timber barons who'll flatten any forest for money and Indians who think the gods live in every tree. In the end, of course, his only escape is to become a real man – which means putting away his briefcase and killing people. Not surprisingly, no one on the festival's hardworking staff so



Feeling good about the Grail: Robin Williams in 'The Fisher King'

Gilliam sent a telegram that read: 'Thank you very much for justifying my decision to sell out'. A line more potentially ironic than anything in his movie

much as mentioned the film to me or to any other critic I know.

After enduring the punishing banality of *Prospero's Books* – never have so many beautifully lit genitalia been put to such unimaginative use – I did my duty as an LA critic and dashed to the press screening of *The Fisher King*. Dashed happily, I might add, for I not only relish Terry Gilliam's visual wit, but the picture had been enjoying great advance word: "I smell Oscar", raved one local tout.

I left the screening room bitterly disappointed. Jeff Bridges plays a bullying radio host who has a breakdown when a listener slaughters a bunch of yuppies in a restaurant; seeking inner peace, he befriends a benevolent street schizo (Robin Williams) who gets him searching for (and finding!) the Grail.

Although the movie has its virtues – including a wonderful visual pun about penises – it is most notable for Richard LaGravenese's much-touted script, which reveals scads about the Hollywood mind. For what the industry adores about this script isn't its literate dialogue or deft structure, but its depth – meaning that it's a compendium of every cliché current around town. It explicitly celebrates love (the New Romanticism); offers male bonding in a mythic setting (cf. *Iron John*); taps into the same sort of otherworldly longings as *Ghost* and *Wings of Desire* (the New Spiritualism); and uses 90s decency to redeem the baroque heartlessness of 80s materialism (the New Simplicity).

Back in the 80s, Terry Gilliam fought gallantly to keep his bleak ending on *Brazil*. Now he's reduced to putting a Gillia-

mesque veneer on the first feelgood movie about the Grail – a picture that begins with powerful images of cruelty, madness and despair and ends up with cuddliness and fireworks over Central Park.

Gilliam's no fool. When *The Fisher King* won the Carlsberg Light Award as the Toronto festival's most audience-friendly picture, Gilliam sent a telegram that read: "Thank you very much for justifying my decision to sell out". A line more potentially ironic than anything in his movie.

Dead again

On my way to Toronto, I stopped in the Midwest to visit my mum, who's undergoing surgery. (She's doing quite well, thank you.) On Saturday night, I headed to a suburban shopping mall to catch up with the surprise hit *Dead Again*, an overblown but not unamusing thriller about reincarnation that director-star Kenneth Branagh couldn't decide whether to make campy or romantic. The packed house didn't care about such evasiveness, nor were they bugged that the plot cheated like crazy and that Branagh is alarmingly lipless for a romantic lead. In fact, what they liked best about the movie was precisely what's worst in it, shrieking with joy at its shamelessly over-the-top climax when the villain is skewered on scissors.

When the lights came up, I suddenly realised why the crowd was so giddy. Of 200 viewers, I was one of perhaps ten people over the age of twenty. For them, this wasn't a cheap pastiche of a dozen better movies from Hollywood's past; they'd never seen *The Lady from Shanghai* or *Spellbound*. All this hokum was fresh to them, and by Costner-era standards anyway, a stylistic *tour de force*.

As for Kenneth Branagh, he still hasn't got the comeuppance my London friends seem to crave. Still, I have to wonder about a prodigy who tries to be Olivier in one movie and Welles in another; it suggests that Branagh's huge ego may be hiding the lack of a distinct personality. In idle hours, I try to guess who he'll want to be next. John Waters? Michelangelo Antonioni? Spike Lee?



Terry Gilliam: Fin de siècle cuddliness

A Venetian affair

Morando Morandini

Founded in 1932 as part of the seventeenth Venice Biennale of Figurative Arts, the oldest film festival in the world this year clocked up its forty-eighth season. It was also the fifth and last under the direction of Guglielmo Biraghi, film critic of the Roman daily, *Il Messaggero*, who was able to feature an exceptionally high number of prestigious directors.

The real veterans in the programme were the directors of the 60s: Jean-Luc Godard, Werner Herzog, Jerzy Skolimowski, Nico Papatakis, István Szabó. The 70s team included two big names in mass-market movies, the Russian Nikita Mikhalkov and the American Terry Gilliam, as well as three non-mainstream directors – Derek Jarman, Philippe Garrel and Chantal Akerman. Leading the field for the youngest generation was Peter Greenaway with *Prospero's Books*, supported by Chinese director Zhang Yimou, Indian Mira Nair, Turk Ömer Kavur, Italian Marco Risi and American Gus Van Sant.

Under the presidency of Italian critic and former festival director Gian Luigi Rondi, the international jury awarded the Golden Lion to Nikita Mikhalkov's *Urga*, a Franco-Soviet film shot in inner Mongolia. Against the backdrop of the great open spaces of the steppes, the film mixes romance, humour, ethnography, Genghis Khan, birth control, technological progress and nostalgia for the good old days. The special jury prize went to eighty-six-year-old Portuguese director Manoel De Oliveira for *A divina comédia*, a metaphysical parable set in an improbably upmarket psychiatric clinic whose patients believe themselves to be biblical figures and characters out of Dostoevsky. The weight of the themes is delicately counterbalanced by the lightness of tone, and the whimsicality of the situation gradually gives way to a Buñuellesque irony.

Pleasing everybody

Had the Golden Lion been given as a result of a referendum carried out among the 2,000 critics and journalists who attended the festival, it is likely it would have gone to Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern*. Set in the 20s in a feudal mansion whose seductive architecture the camera repeatedly explores, the film is a cool, stylised melodrama and doleful plaint on the female condition worthy of Mizoguchi. Zhang won instead one of the three Silver Lions, the only prize to be awarded unanimously.

The other Lions went to Philippe Garrel's *J'entends plus la guitare* and Terry Gilliam's *The Fisher King*. Garrel's is a claustrophobic film about heterosexual love and coupledness. Its dominant theme is circumscription and suffocation, as the camera closes in on the characters, cutting them off from their surroundings.



Eyes on the throne: Tilda Swinton as Isabella in Jarman's 'Edward II'

Gilliam's film couldn't be more different: a blend of comedy with drama, realism with fantasy, social comment with myth, and the skyscrapers of Manhattan with medieval castles and knights in search of the Grail. Gilliam succeeds in maintaining narrative interest and imposing a coherent style on diverse material, while his relish for excess and sentimentality is mitigated by exceptional performances.

The Volpi Cups award for actors went to Tilda Swinton in Derek Jarman's *Edward II* and River Phoenix in Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* – both films that deal with homosexual themes and Elizabethan theatre. Jarman's angry, painful transposition of Marlowe's tragedy presents diverse contemporary perspectives on the play and its subject; more obliquely, Van Sant grafts the characters of Prince Hal and Falstaff from *Henry IV* on to a modern road movie about two rent boys.

One of the three *Oselle d'oro* (a kind of consolation prize) went to *Mississippi Masala* by Indian director Mira Nair, at thirty-four the youngest director in the competition and, along with the Belgian Chantal Akerman, one of only two women. Her film deals with the topic of racism in a manner that is lively, effective and very Hollywood (pleasing everybody without upsetting anybody). Another *Osella* went to Werner Herzog's *Schrei aus Stein* (*Scream of Stone*), which excites interest more for the manner and circumstances in which it was made in Patagonia than for the end result. The third *Osella* and Gold Medal of the Republican Senate were awarded to Jean-Luc Godard's *Allemagne Neuf-Zéro*, a sixty-two-minute TV film

in six sections. In this lucid and melancholy reflection on the reunification of Germany, the French director continues to ask questions and open cultural horizons, while remaining aware of our impotence to explain the world.

Younger generation

Apart from the special Golden Lion given to Gian Maria Volonté in celebration of his entire career, the Italian cinema left this festival empty-handed, but not shamefaced. Emidio Greco's *Una storia semplice* is a competent reworking of Leonardo Sciascia's last work of fiction; Marco Risi's *Il muro di gomma* a robust docu-drama exposing one of the many scandals of recent Italian political history; Fabio Carpi's *L'amore necessario* an elegant homage to Lacroix' *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, considered afresh in the light of psychoanalysis but spoiled by the didacticism of the dialogue and a certain intellectual archness. The International Critics Week gave a prize to first-time director Antonio Capuano's *Vito e gli altri*, a Neapolitan story of violence that has echoes of early Pasolini.

There are also references to Pasolini in Luigi Faccini's *Notte di stelle*, one of the eight new films screened in the Mattinate del Cinema Italiano section. Apart from Silvano Agosti's *Uova di garofano*, a strange autobiographical film about the final years of fascism and the early post-war period, the six other entries were all by the younger generation. The impression was of a cinema with a wide range of concerns, energetic and more willing than in the past to reckon with its audience.

Translated by Liz Heron

'Urga': a mix of romance, humour, ethnography, Genghis Khan, birth control, technological progress and nostalgia

The falling sun

Peter Biskind

Remember Pearl Harbor? Probably not. But for the Yanks it was a big deal. Now, fifty years later, it looks as though Hollywood may be the best revenge. Which is to say, although the jury is still out, that the Japanese may have made nearly as big a miscalculation in buying into the movie business as they did in dropping bombs on the Arizona.

Here is the Sony/Matsushita update. First Sony. How much did it (over)pay for Columbia? Somewhere in the region of \$6 billion, a total that includes the \$3.4 billion purchase price, another \$1.3 billion in assumed debt, and another \$1 billion and change in start-up costs, including salaries rumoured to be in the \$2.75 million a year range for each of the two top executives, Peter Guber and Jon Peters.

Lost horizon

In addition, the recently rechristened Sony Entertainment (which includes Columbia and Tristar) is committed to five forthcoming big-budget movies (*Hook*, *Bugsy*, *Radio Flyer*, *A League of Their Own*, *A Few Good Men*) for another \$220 million. In three years, Guber-Peters spent \$700 million overall on new product, and the team has to generate \$300 million a year in overhead to operate the studio. (No studio has ever made more than \$365 million in one year.) Columbia has also struck expensive deals – worth \$45 to \$65 million – with Francis Coppola, the Zucker brothers, and James Brooks.

It is well known that Sony miscalculated badly when it assumed that Guber and Peters, then at Warners, could just walk away from their jobs. Estimates of the monetary value of the concessions Sony granted Warners to pry Guber-Peters loose are as high as \$800 million. That's a lot of Walkmen. According to one Japanese financial source, Sony paid twenty-three times cash flow for Columbia, before all the additional costs.

Sony profits dropped 20 per cent (or 34 per cent, depending on whom you talk to) in the first quarter of this year, and the company is expected to try to raise \$2 to \$3 billion in capital markets to cover current debts and expansion. This, at a time when Japan's economic bubble has burst, and interest rates have doubled from 4 to 8 per cent. At the same time, the consumer electronics market has bottomed out, and Sony has seen whatever expectations it may have had for big profits on its new DAT technology dashed by music industry opposition, which allowed rivals to catch up with other technologies, like digital tape.

It is not a pretty picture, particularly for Akio Morita, who according to *Vanity Fair*, is regarded as something of a provincial in his native land, and was forced to curry favour with Japan's reactionary busi-



ness establishment by writing a book with a far right nationalist that touted Japanese racial superiority. In this analysis, the deal was hatched not so much to buy software to feed Sony's hardware, but more to satisfy the vanity of Morita and former Sony, née CBS Records head, Walter Yernikoff.

So far, Columbia/Tristar's record has been mixed. Their combined market share is 19.4, five points ahead of second-place Fox. Columbia produced two big hits this summer, *City Slickers* and *Boyz n the Hood*, while Tristar distributed *Terminator 2*. But on the downside were *Return to the Blue Lagoon* (Columbia) and *Hudson Hawk* (Tristar). The \$25 to \$40 million in distribution fees Tristar will get from *Terminator 2* will partly, but not entirely, defray its losses on the Bruce Willis turkey.

Regarding *Hook*, on which (along with *Bugsy*), Tristar is pinning its hopes for a merry Christmas, rumour has it that Steven Spielberg, Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams and Julia Roberts will be siphoning profits off the top (as much as 40 per cent in all markets, according to *Variety*) that would usually go to the studio. So even if the picture does phenomenally well, SE may not.

Critics say that the company is top-heavy with executives, like Jonathan Dolgen, Allan Levine and Sidney Ganis, in addition to Guber's pal Mark Canton, who moved over from Warners' replacing Columbia head Frank Price. Guber is said to rule the company with a heavy hand, rendering Price and Tristar head Mike Medavoy relatively powerless. "Frank and Mike can greenlight a low-budget film, but not a film that costs more than \$25 million", says one source. According to the *New York Times*, Sony bought out Price's contract for \$15-\$20 million, in addition to the odd \$20 million it recently paid Peters to take a hike.

Vanity Fair suggests that Peters' excesses embarrassed Sony, and that Columbia *eminent* grise Ray Stark and CEO Allan Levine persuaded Guber to oust him. Peters, however, was effectively under the protection of his old flame, Barbra Streisand, who was still shooting *Prince of Tides* at Columbia, and Guber was reluctant to act until she had wrapped. As soon as she did, Peters went.

Columbia watchers are wondering if Guber will soon follow. They can't help noticing that he keeps turning scripts over to Guber-Peters Entertainment, the company he and his erstwhile partner founded and which Sony considerably bought and moved to Columbia. If Guber goes, that will be the end of the management team for which Sony paid through the nose, a sorry and humiliating postscript to the buyout.

Matsushita, in a frantic effort to close the perceived hardware/software synergy gap opened up when Sony bought Columbia, did somewhat better when it pur-

chased MCA for \$6.1 billion, paying only 16.3 times cash flow. But even so, its first quarter profits dropped 16 per cent. While Sony has built its reputation on innovative R&D, Matsushita, which is older and bigger and includes brand names like Panasonic, JVC and Technics, specialises in refining other companies' new products and delivering them to more people at a lower cost. This is what it did with the MCA deal as well, studying and refining Sony's acquisition of Columbia.

The MCA buyout lacked the high comedy of the Guber-Peters circus, and was not as well covered in the press until last September, when Connie Bruck weighed in with a lengthy opus in the *New Yorker*. According to Bruck, the deal was orchestrated by CAA's Mike Ovitz, who had always been obsessed with Lew Wasserman's company and initially recommended it to Sony. Sony passed, because MCA was too expensive. Yet MCA was a more attractive target than Columbia; it was bigger and included theme parks, real estate, a music division, cinemas, a more expensive library and an experienced management team already in place.

The third man

The most remarkable revelation Bruck serves up concerns Ovitz' role in the deal. As Matsushita's advisor, he not only targeted MCA and insisted on choosing Matsushita's lawyers and investment bankers, but also kept the two sides apart until the very end of the negotiations. Said one MCA executive: "I said, 'Ovitz is in the middle. All we know about what they are saying is what he tells us, and all they know about what we are saying is what he tells them – and he may be telling both of us things that the other has never said'".

Weirder still, and if true a testimony to Ovitz' skills, the CAA head brought MCA to the table by assuring MCA's Sid Sheinberg that Matsushita would offer MCA \$75 to \$90 a share for its stock, then selling at \$36 a share. Matsushita eventually offered no more than \$60. (The price finally agreed upon was \$66, plus a stake in a TV station worth \$3 a share.)

MCA executives say they would never have nibbled had they known how low Matsushita's offer would be. Ovitz claimed Matsushita deceived him, but Bruck reports that there is now a consensus among MCA executives that Ovitz knew the Japanese company's intentions and exaggerated the offer to bring MCA into play. "If he had said that their range was in the 60s, no meetings would ever have taken place".

If true, this play, along with the way Ovitz kept each side in the dark – enabling him, in effect, to manipulate the top executives of two of the world's largest and most successful companies – is truly breath-taking, with implications that are just beginning to be understood.

Estimates of the monetary value of the concessions Sony granted Warners to pry Guber-Peters loose are as high as \$800 million

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From 'Scarface' to 'New Jack City', the gangster film puts the ethnic family firmly at the heart of the matter, argues Mark Winokur

● In July of this year the US opening of John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood* provoked a burst of racial violence that ended in the death of two people and the injury of thirty-five. As a result, cinemas showing the film increased security by as much as 600 per cent, many going so far as to install metal detectors. The previous March saw a riot at a suburban Los Angeles cinema, where because of overbooking many black patrons were unable to get in to see the newly released black gangster movie, Mario Van Peebles' *New Jack City*. The cinema responded by withdrawing the film.

There is a metaphor in this scenario, in which blacks are unable to see themselves represented on screen and in which the representation is finally deleted. The traditional Hollywood solution to the cultural anxiety produced by race is to submerge as fully as possible all controversial discussion. But silencing race does not work; instead, ethnicity resurfaces in such a way that its representation begins to say more about the film-makers than about the ethnic groups themselves.

Various ethnic fantasies have been very popular in the 80s and 90s. Most visible is the recent re-invention of the feature-length, live-performance comedy films of Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy. Even romances have resurrected the clichéd gambit of apparent oppo-

sites attracting in box office successes such as Norman Jewison's *Moonstruck* (1987), Joan Micklin Silver's *Crossing Delancey* (1988), Donald Petrie's *Mystic Pizza* (1988), Richard Benjamin's *Mermaids* (1990) and Barry Levinson's *Avalon* (1990).

But it is the contemporary gangster film that best embodies the ambivalence of film-makers towards ethnicity and race. On the one hand, these films seem to validate the closeness and eccentricity of the ethnic family: criminal ethnic families can be fun, as in Andrew Bergman's *The Freshman* (1990), or emotive, as in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather Part III* (1990). But the ethnic family also emerges as an institution that encourages familial psychosis. One character in John Huston's *Prizzi's Honor* (1985) asserts that "Sicilians would rather eat their children than part with money. And Sicilians are very fond of their children".

This vision of the ethnic family as colourfully psychotic contains a subversive critique of the intertwined ideologies of American family and American business. Certainly the *Godfather* films suggest a connection between ethnicity and upward mobility: the Corleones are an emotive version of every family whose desire is for the next generation to 'have it better than



we did'. The gangster films of the 80s and 90s contain covert criticism of two presidential administrations bent on returning America to 'traditional family values' while undercutting the economic underpinning of its families.

As with the Warner Bros gangster films of the 30s, the current wave of new movies has come into being during a period of economic disaster for a visibly significant number of Americans. So, far from contradicting the notion that gangster films flourish in times of economic depression, the resurgence of the genre in the 80s could be linked to the dire extremity of the economy for the mass of people who go to the movies. As Nino Brown asserts in *New Jack City* (1991): "You got to rob to get rich in the Reagan era".

Nostalgia

In their nostalgia for 'new immigrant' family closeness and their focus on the passing of that closeness, gangster films acknowledge the uprooting of family life. But while the Warner Bros gangster films dealt with essentially sociological themes – blaming the 'environment' in the form of Hell's Kitchen or the Lower East Side for gangsterism – Coppola and his successors use the psychoanalytic. In the films of the late 80s and 90s, gangsterism is not determined by poverty (in *The Godfather Part III*, Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas*, 1990, *Prizzi's Honor* and Jonathan Demme's *Married to the Mob*, 1988, the second- or third-generation gangster is born into the middle, upper or wealthy classes). This displacement of an essentially political and economic problem on to the family itself means that despite their often enlightened depiction of the ethnic, gangster films of the 80s and 90s make these families once again the scapegoat for social ills. The elegiac quality of many of these films is belied by their contention that the ethnicity celebrated as the cement holding the family together is in fact responsible for its destruction. Hence the cri-

Eating children is

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tique of American politics and business is undercut by a critique of the ethnic family.

The *nouveaux* gangster films also minimise the importance of the post-Second World War immigrant groups. Koreans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, Vietnamese, Jamaicans, Japanese, Nicaraguans, Puerto Ricans, Laotians, and, but for one significant exception each, blacks, Chinese and Cubans are not represented in gangster or any other genre films. Of the films discussed here, only three – *New Jack City*, Michael Cimino's *Year of the Dragon* (1985) and Brian De Palma's *Scarface* (1983) – are about new immigrant groups. And *Year of the Dragon*, presumably about New York's Chinatown, has a 'Pole' as its racist hero – as if repressive behaviour directed against newly oppressed minorities is acceptable when the oppressor is part of an historically oppressed minority.

Most contemporary gangster films focus on the same ethnic groups as their predecessors: Italian, Irish, Jewish and WASP. James Cagney in William A. Wellman's *Public Enemy* (1931) was Irish; Paul Muni in Howard Hawks' *Scarface* (1932) and Edward G. Robinson in Mervyn LeRoy's *Little Caesar* (1931) were Italian. Perhaps the Coens' *Miller's Crossing* (1990), replete with Jews manipulating Irish who are killing Italians who are killing both Italians and Jews, is the best example of the resurfacing of traditional ethnic tensions. And several recent films seem to take place in the past to justify resurrecting these tensions: Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables* (1987), *Goodfellas*, *Miller's Crossing*.

These films present a nostalgic view of old crimes as a way of avoiding having to confront new social problems. In treating the same ethnic groups as the films of the 30s, they give credence to Jorge Luis Borges' assertion that the meaning of a text changes in a changed historical context, even if that text is repeated word for word. For members of a 30s audience, many of whom were first-generation immigrants from Italy, Ireland and Eastern Europe, the



Dressed to kill: Edward G. Robinson on the receiving end in 'Little Caesar', above; Robert De Niro on his way to respectability in 'The Godfather Part II', below left

sign 'No Irish Need Apply' or the anti-Catholic Nast cartoons were recent painful memories. But the decision to feature the same groups in the current spate of films masks the continuing racism of US society behind the convenient half-truth that the traditional immigrant groups have made it – as, *relative to the newer groups*, they have. It is a game in which the audience is made to feel sympathy for a group that is no longer threatening, whereas those groups that would show how America still discriminates are not represented.

Fratricide

The Untouchables contains a symptomatically cynical moment in a clichéd reference to the Odessa steps sequence from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). While the photography encourages our concern with the survival of yet another baby bouncing down the steps during a shoot-out, it records as incidental the shooting of a sailor. We are relieved that the baby lives; we are not shown what happens to the sailor. The baby is the 'old' immigrant; the sailor, more recently ashore, the new.

Contemporary gangster films are more concerned with remaining faithful to their cellu-

loid antecedents than with representing history. In a perfectly post-modern move, the history of the representation of ethnics begins to replace the history of the people represented. All the early gangster films, but especially Hawks' *Scarface*, are in one way or another recalled: like Tony Camonte, who whistles arias as he kills, the characters in Prizzi's *Honor* listen to opera; the Brian De Palma *Scarface* borrows not only the title and plot, but the intense misogyny of the original (in this *Scarface*, Tony Montana, a simulacrum of Tony Camonte, asserts: "I watched the guys like Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney. They teach me to talk"). *New Jack City* features clips of De Palma's *Scarface*. And of course *The Godfather Part III*, in its cast, its photography, its music, evokes the first two *Godfather* movies.

The films of the early 30s, including *Scarface*, tended to see the nuclear family as a site of values apart from the gangster's activities; an alternative world that defined itself in part by its rejection of the gangster. It was often also the location for a character's Americanisation. For example, in Wellman's *Public Enemy*, Tommy Powers' brother lives at home with their mother. He is more upright (literally taller than the diminutive Cagney), and in two-shots of the siblings it is made clear that, in maintaining his ties to his family, he has the advantage of looking more 'American' in the Horatio Alger tradition – his clothes are less flashy, his demeanour more stolid and forthright – than his brother. The brother goes away to fight the Hun, returning a hero. He knocks Tommy down several times in the course of the film, and Tommy does not dare strike back at so iconic a figure.

In contrast, contemporary gangster films, in a pattern established by the *Godfather* movies, tend to conflate the values of the gangster and his family. In *New Jack City*, black crime boss Wesley Snipes/Nino consciously constructs his organisation as a 'family', shooting his self- ▶

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◀ ascribed 'brother' when he feels this brother can betray him. In *The Godfather Part III*, Michael Corleone's *Godfather II*, murder of his brother Fredo is raised to the status of a theme, being replayed in the accidental death of Michael's daughter on the steps of the opera house. While insisting on its pedigree as inheritor of early Hollywood films, the contemporary gangster film ironically charts the end of the lower-class ethnic family from which gangsters are seen to derive.

The threat to these families always derives from an ethnic dynamic. Most conspicuously, the nuclear family is often portrayed as at risk from obligations to the extended family (the ethnic groups are traditionally presumed to be more influenced by 'clanishness'). Large families are also the province of American blacks, who are accused of procreating in order to defraud the welfare system. So nuclear family ties disappear to ensure the survival of the extended family as (depending on one's bias) a form of primitive communism in which the whole family owns everything in common, or a form of late-capitalism in which the family of ownership is in fact appropriated by the things it owns, submerging its identity under the corporate logo it has invented for itself. In the *Godfather* films, brothers are killed by brothers so that the extended family can survive as a viable corporation; the extended family is part of the rhetoric of *New Jack City*; in *The Godfather Part III*, Mary Corleone (Sofia Coppola) dies from a bullet meant for Michael Corleone, expiating the sins of her father.

The plots of comic gangster films – for example, De Palma's *Wise Guys* (1986) and Demme's *Married to the Mob* – routinely centre on protagonists attempting to escape from the extended family in order to preserve or found nuclear families. In *Married to the Mob*, Demme's highly mobile camera, rather than giving the sense of space associated with the tracking shot, serves to throw into relief the constricting quality of

the ethnic family. In a typical shot near the beginning of the film, Angela (Michele Pfeiffer), unwillingly surrounded by a group of mafioso wives in a beauty parlour, attempts to leave. The women form a tight circle of which Angela is a part, and the camera circumnavigates them, emphasising their well-intentioned, but loudly insecure, speech and garish dress. That the problem with these women is their ethnically determined over-emotionalism is highlighted by the conscious opposition between Angela's pensiveness (looking in the mirror, she sees not her new hairdo, but her unsatisfactory life) and the more vulgar antics of Connie (Mercedes Ruehl), who at the end of the sequence summarises the situation with: "That bitch. She thinks her shit don't stink".

Perhaps the most cynically amusing dynamic to have emerged in these films is the way ethnicity threatens 'real' (non-ethnic) families. Several films – from *Married to the Mob* to Stephen Frears' *The Grifters* (1990) – contain mob threats to more or less normative relationships; in *The Untouchables*, the Italian gangsters even go so far as to threaten the lives of government agent Elliot Ness' family. In the last shot of *Goodfellas*, gratuitous machine-gun fire is directed at the audience by Tommy DeVito (Joe Pesci). There is no dialogue, just sound and fury – a threat to the audience that it would be better off dead.

Incest

But the threat to the family also comes from within (in a truly xenophobic culture, the most interesting threats always erupt in the place whose purity xenophobia supposedly protects). *Godfathers* betray sons in *Prizzi's Honor*, *Goodfellas* and *Married to the Mob*; women betray their men, or betray them as vulnerable.

The change from the 70s to the 80s is epitomised by Talia Shire's Connie – earlier the mousey sister of Michael Corleone – who in the most recent *Godfather* movie calls up what Pau-

line Kael has described as "dark plotting women like Livia in *I Claudius*, and Lady Macbeth, and Lucrezia Borgia". In *Married to the Mob*, Mercedes Ruehl is the only human being her mob boss husband fears; in *The Grifters*, Anjelica Huston murders her son and impersonates his lover; in *Prizzi's Honor*, Anjelica Huston engineers her father's death and her ex-lover's assassination of his wife. It is as if these women, who have no real place in the business plots of the films, contain the secret to the connection between the family and crime. Other national cinemas seem more easily able to operate without this tendency towards hysterical familial behaviour – for example, John Mackenzie's *The Long Good Friday* (1979) or Jonathan Lynn's *Nuns on the Run* (1990).

Of course the secret is incest – presented as the most interesting instance of betrayal within the family. Between siblings, we can see shades of Tony Camonte and his love for Cesca in the love of Tony Montana for his sister in De Palma's *Scarface* (she offers to have sex with him – beginning to strip – just before she tries to kill him). In *Miller's Crossing*, the relationship between siblings Bernie and Verna, openly referred to as incestuous by Bernie, is clearly manipulative of her on his part, but just as clearly a sign of her manipulation of all men. In *Married to the Mob*, Angela's husband Frank is 'like a son' to Tony the Tiger, who has him killed for fooling around with his mistress. And in another parody of the Oedipal relation, Anjelica Huston tries to rival her son's lover in *The Grifters* (she attempts to seduce her son and dons his lover's clothes after killing her). In almost all cases, incest is initiated by the person with greatest familial control; powerful family members derive pleasure from sexually exploiting less powerful ones.

The sequence from De Palma's *Scarface* showing the transfiguration and death of Gina, sister of gangster Tony Montana, bears close analysis. Like every encounter between the siblings,



Fathers and sons:
Brando and his bloodied child in 'The Godfather', below; Pacino assuming the family throne in 'The Godfather Part II', right; De Niro as brutal Chicago patriarch in 'The Untouchables', bottom right

The repeater:
Paul Muni in the original 'Scarface' (1932), left; Al Pacino in De Palma's 1983 remake, above



it is characterised by an intrusion of business and violence. The sequence is the last of four in which the two meet (the others include the first attempt against Tony's life and his murder of Gina's husband, his best friend and business partner). Gina's death occurs in Tony's office, in the home he has bought her after killing his best friend Manny in a jealous rage, thinking that the latter had shacked up with his sister.

Gina confronts Tony in a series of cross-cuts. She enters in an open negligée, asking "You can't stand for another man to be touching me, so you want me Tony, huh?" But this cross-cutting is itself cross-cut with shots of an assassin sent by one of Tony's drug-business partners creeping along the balcony to the window behind Tony, so that long shots of Gina are from the point of view of either Tony or the assassin. Gina opens her negligée further and starts to shoot at Tony with a pistol hitherto concealed below the frame. In a carefully choreographed series of shots reminiscent again of Eisenstein, Tony stands up from three slightly different angles as Gina approaches him and starts to shoot. This editing gives the impression of his body as one extended erection. At the highest pitch of Gina's hysteria, when she is screaming over and over, "Fuck me, Tony, fuck me", the assassin enters and shoots Gina more or less where she has been fondling herself. In a rage, Tony attacks the third man he has caught paying attentions to his sister.

The sequence is in one sense self-explanatory: it is Gina's recognition of one motive for Tony's behaviour. But the sequence is complicated by the assassin, who connects violence, male sexual rivalry and business with the incest. The assassin, standing outside looking in, conflates numerous traditional symbols for death with notions of the unconscious (the assassin is standing behind Tony and penetrates his sister with gunshot), all subsumed under the realisation that this is a business transaction. (Tony has previously described this

particular kind of transaction to the partner who will ultimately send the assassin as: "I never fucked anyone in this life that didn't have it coming".) Gina's murderer simultaneously represents an unconscious incestuous desire and Tony's business interests.

Gangster films suggest that in corporate business, as in incest, the trust that defines the relationship between powerful and powerless is frequently betrayed. Further, the mixing of family and business is tantamount to incest in our culture, with its spurious (Anglo) separation between the private and the public, its establishment of suburban homes away from the workplace, its legislated relegation of ethnic languages to the home and English to the public realm. Like incest, nepotism is viewed with distaste, but is not discussed in the place in which it happens. It is punished in the films, in which one of the couple usually dies: Mary, Michael Corleone's daughter in *The Godfather Part III*; Bernie in *Miller's Crossing*; Roy Dillon (John Cusack) in *The Grifters*.

Power

This incestuous use of the family for business could be seen as a critique of the late-capitalist American corporation, which supports the idea of family not only with annual picnics and Christmas parties, but with the claim that it constitutes the family. This claim is buttressed in part by social psychology (in-house psychologists who help workers cope with job dissatisfaction by 'dealing with feelings') and in part by a maladapted appropriation of Japanese notions of an exchange of corporate loyalty in thought and deed for a degree of openness between management and labour. Such claims are spurious, the gangster movies imply, because they obscure the power relations behind the benevolent paternalism. The corporation, like the gangster, loves its object only so long as that object can be used – not just for the money to be made, but for the pleasure in

maintaining in suspense the power to reveal oneself as rapaciously powerful. The revisionary gangster film may feed the critical industry for years to come, in that it not only lends itself to Marxist and psychoanalytic critiques, but renders those critiques interdependent rather than mutually exclusive.

Of course, the irony in this critique of corporate culture is that it devalues the ethnic family by identifying it with the multinational corporation, so that the ethnic family comes to be identified with the phenomenon most responsible for the disintegration of the idea of ethnic integrity, whether as transnational cultural leveller – Disneyland and Coca-Cola – or as exploiter of labour. The appearance of political correctness is made at the expense of the groups for whom the films are correct.

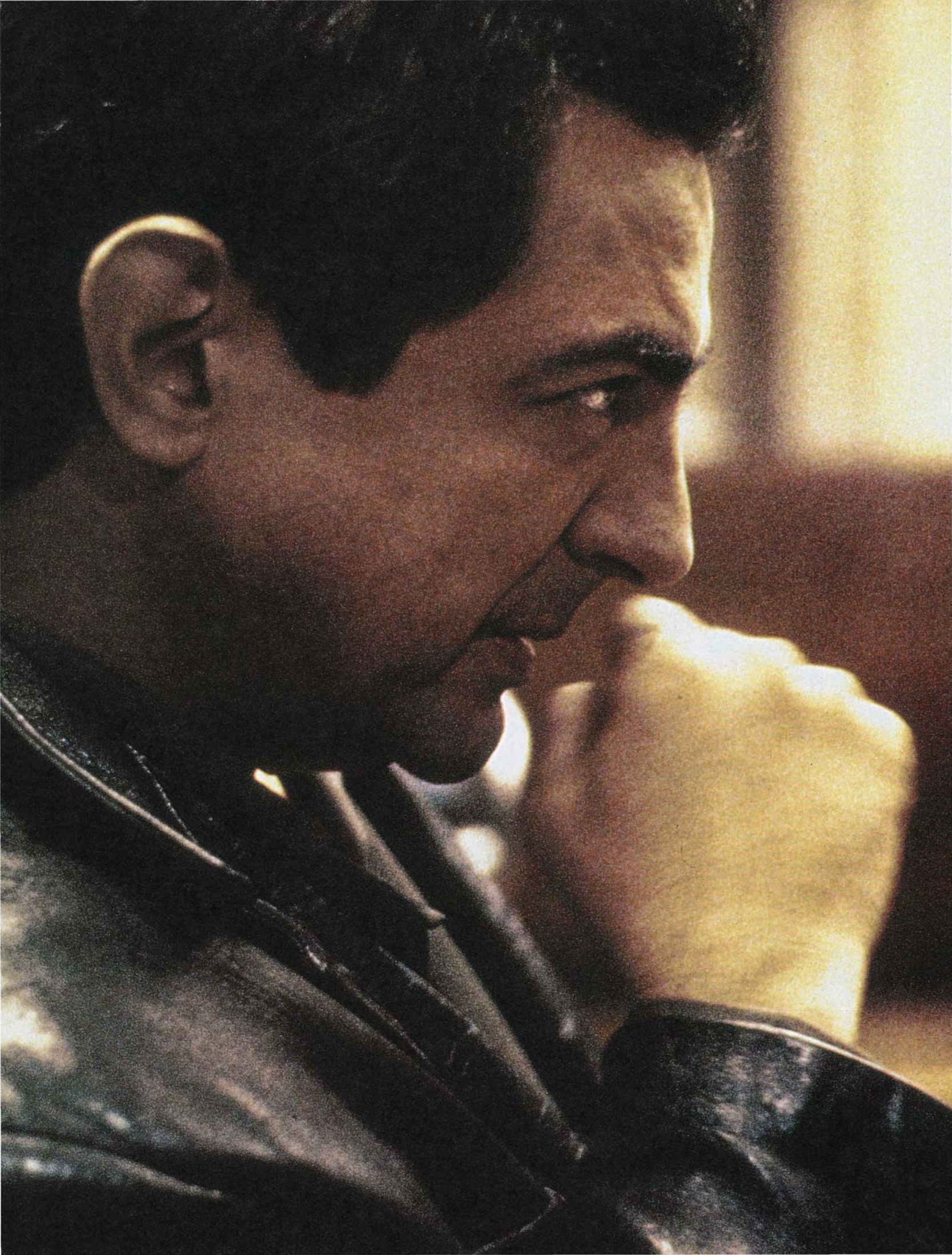
This reversal of historical truth of course makes sense – these films are themselves corporate endeavours which aim to create a consumer audience that compliantly supports the film industry. (The kind of group who would riot is not the kind of group deserving of representation.) The purpose of the gangster film is finally to *render*, in both meanings of the word, a safe ethnicity: through these movies it is represented and made harmless. The *New Jack City* rioters understood the futility of supporting a film they could not get in to see, and perceptively tied the film to larger issues – the Gulf War, police racism, and so on.

In the game of Hollywood representation, though, the rioters lose, in part because the movies have already defined them as marginal. The suburb in which the riot took place is considering strategies for keeping undesirable elements out and returning the neighbourhood to its white, antebellum glory. The message of the films is the same as the message of the newly installed cinema metal detectors: check your guns at the door, boyz. Ideology as weapon may be all right for a white Robin Hood, but not for the Boyz N the Hood.

The women's story:
Kathleen Turner turns assassin in 'Prizzi's Honor', left; Anjelica Huston's odd 'family' in 'The Grifters', right



Rare sightings:
into the white world of the traditional ethnic gangster movies stride the black hoods of 'New Jack City', left, and the 'Boyz N the Hood', above



Identity parade



In a New York riven by Jewish-black tension, J. Hoberman watches and judges 'Homicide', David Mamet's tale of a Jewish cop, his black colleagues and a brutal murder

Joe Mantegna as a Jewish cop is torn by divided loyalties after the murder of an old Jewish woman, above

With the unselfconscious absorption of someone working something out for himself, David Mamet has concocted an urban policier that has a deracinated Jewish detective searching for his identity in a grim world of tribal violence. *Homicide* ostensibly pits Jews against blacks and Jews against neo-Nazis, but its underlying vision is that of Jews against the world. Mamet is a master of unpleasantness, but his latest is awful in a particularly timely way. Perhaps inspired by the new and widespread post-Gulf War concern for Israel reported among American Jews, as well as by the resurgence of political anti-Semitism in the former Soviet empire, *Homicide* opens in New York after a summer of black-Jewish tensions.

Times Square, where black Muslims sometimes sell the nineteenth-century forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, along with incense and herbal perfumes, was enlivened by a pair of street preachers explaining that the so-called Jews stole their identity from the black Jews of Africa and that's why Hitler wanted to kill them. This convoluted theorising was comic relief compared to events in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, a once-genteel neighbourhood shared by West Indian immigrants and highly insular, ultra-traditional Hasidic Jews. In late August, a Hasidic driver ran a red light and hit a seven-year-old black boy. Fed by rumours that a Hasidic private ambulance rescued the driver and left the child to die, the accident precipitated four days of violence, during which stores were looted, synagogues attacked, homes trashed and a Hasidic student was fatally stabbed.

The chants of 'Heil Hitler' and 'Kill the Jews' heard in Crown Heights crystallised a tendency that had already surfaced in the anti-Semitic pronouncements of the militant rap group Public Enemy and the gratuitously caricatured Jewish club owners of Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues*. They also fed the media firestorm already raging around Professor Leonard Jeffries, the popular chairman of the African-American Studies department at City College. Jeffries, who teaches that "rich Jews" financed the slave trade, made tabloid headlines with his assertion that "a conspiracy, planned and plotted and programmed out of Hollywood by people called Greenberg and Weisberg and Trigliani" had systematically denigrated black people. "Russian Jewry had a particular control over the movies, and with their financial partners, the Mafia, put together a financial system of destruction of black people".

Ready made for exegesis by Dr Jeffries (or George Bush, who recently cast himself as "one lonely guy" battling against the "powerful political forces" of the pro-Israel lobby), *Homicide* is indifferent, if not hostile, to people of colour – evoking a shadowy network of powerful Jews who speak in a secret tongue and are concerned only with themselves. This clandestine society is as vast as it is unlikely –

encompassing everything from retired Irgun commandos and European refugees to wealthy assimilationists and students of cabbala. (Jeffries would likely add the movie's producers to the melange – they must have underwritten this story for sinister reasons of their own.)

When detective Bobby Gold (Joe Mantegna) and his partner (William H. Macy) find a rookie cop pinned down in a candy-store by a snarling guard dog, the absurd scenario darkens with the discovery of an old woman dead behind the counter, a Mogen David dangling from her neck. Black neighbours are already buzzing about the fortune the storekeeper supposedly kept in her basement when, as if by telepathy, her next of kin – a well-dressed doctor and his stylish daughter – materialise on the curb. Intuiting that Bobby is Jewish the same way they intuited the old woman's murder, the two demand that he be put on the case. We, of course, are already well aware that Bobby is a Jew – in his first scene a rampaging superior, black of course, has dressed him down as "a little kike".

Shot in Baltimore, *Homicide* retails a generic asphalt jungle in which African-American officers run the police department and black cops routinely blame the white victims of senseless violence. That's the way it is, at least in Bobby's world. What really throws this seasoned cop off-kilter is having to deal with all manner of bitter, withholding, punitive Jews. Sent to the doctor's luxurious apartment because "someone took a shot at the Yids", he's reproached for his indifference. Confused by the Yiddish he hears (if not the melancholy bass theme which must unavoidably accompany it), and angry to have been stuck with this case, Bobby phones his partner to ventilate. "They're not my fucking people", he rants, oblivious of the comely Jewess (Rebecca Pidgeon) who has uncannily materialised in the background. "Do you hate yourself that much?", she asks him, before vanishing from the plot.

In *Homicide*, as in medieval Christendom, Jews are defined by their 'secret language': as in the Mossad, they are measured by their muscle. Bobby fails on both counts. His reputation as a cop is based on his (crypto-Jewish) linguistic skill – his speciality is persuading cornered criminals to give up their hostages – but that's only a trick for the goyim. Even a traditional scholar turns muscular when faced with Bobby: "You say you're a Jew and you can't read Hebrew – what are you then?" It's a good question. Bobby Gold may not be the only Jew in the world ignorant of Hebrew, but it's hard to imagine any Jew so baffled by the mere existence of other Jews. Bobby has no companion, no family, no childhood memories. His background is a void, his only friend his Irish partner. By the end of the movie, he is an unhappy version of the abstract, essential Jew that Philip Roth evokes in the penultimate paragraph of *The Counterlife*: "A Jew without ►

◀ Jews, without Judaism, without Zionism, without Jewishness, without a temple or an army or even a pistol, a Jew clearly without a home, just the object itself, like a glass or an apple".

Of course, Jews can always be defined by anti-Semites. In one of *Homicide*'s least lovely scenes, Bobby reveals his repressed *jüdische Selbsthaas* – the appropriately German term for the condition of Jewish 'self-hatred' – to a sympathetic Israeli woman. Because he was a Jew, Bobby confesses, the other cops thought he was a "pussy", a "broad" a "clown". It's a sequence that cries out for application of the so-called Jewish science – particularly as the movie's muscle Jews similarly regard Bobby as a wimp. To complete the syndrome by which some Jews can excoriate other Jews with the identical qualities that anti-Semites associate with all Jews, the neo-Nazi propaganda which Bobby subsequently discovers also makes much of supposed Jewish effeminacy.

"I am neither expecting people to call [*Homicide*] anti-Semitic, nor will I be surprised if they do", says Mamet. Whatever the movie is, it is scarcely the prime example of *jüdische Selbsthaas*. That distinction belongs to the Coen brothers' *Barton Fink*. At the period when that Cannes laureate is set, the virtual acme of worldwide anti-Semitism, America's two most potent Jewish stereotypes were the vulgar Hollywood mogul and the idealistic New York communist – both presumably battling for the hearts and minds of the working masses. That *Barton Fink* contemptuously locks these stereotypes in a sadomasochistic embrace without permitting either to comment on it – while the film-makers themselves remain aloof – is as savagely reductive as the patter in a minstrel show.

Unlike the grotesquely derisive *Barton Fink*, *Homicide* has an agenda. Mamet wants to plumb the divided souls of American Jews, explain the militarisation of what, for a thousand years, had been a non-violent culture (issues which, in a more encoded, convoluted fashion, inform Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*). Is America perhaps a mirage? An innocent toy store conceals a Nazi propaganda shop; the realistic Jewish civilians all pack guns, while the delusional Jewish cop can't hold on to his. This uniformed schlemiel act reaches its nadir when Bobby is captured and cowed by a gang of Jewish elders who operate out of an abandoned Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society office and nosh a weird assortment of 'Jewish' food (salami, shlivovits, Jaffa oranges). There are aspects of *Homicide* that are truly ridiculous but, given the current cultural climate, you can't laugh at them.

The Jews in *Homicide* seem other to Mamet, Gold, and even themselves. The film proposes that there is an international Jewish conspiracy – or, rather, a counter-conspiracy – and what's more, it's a necessary one. The fantasies of Jews that haunt the Gentile mind return to spook the Jews as well.

Framing Mamet



What kind of cinema does a playwright obsessed with the power of language and theatricality make, asks Richard Combs?

The plot of *Homicide* hinges on a word. But between the beginning and the end of the film the word changes. 'GROFAZ' is a clue that police officer Bobby Gold finds on a strip of paper while prowling a rooftop in search of a sniper. Or at least there might have been a sniper, and he might have been taking shots at a Jewish family, one of whom, an old woman who ran a corner store in a poor black neighbourhood, has just been brutally killed.

"It never stops, does it? Against the Jews", comments the old woman's granddaughter. But Officer Gold, himself a Jew, resists the idea of conspiracy, and anyway he has other professional matters on his mind. He and his colleagues, particularly his Irish partner, Sullivan, were in pursuit of a big black villain, until Gold stumbled on the corner shop shooting and was reassigned. He resents this, and being pushed into the company of these 'rich Yids'. (His captain tells him that they're his people; "I thought I was your people", he replies.) To Gold, the disaster that has hit this family seems to spring, self-inflicted, from their own hermetic world. "Four thousand years of anti-Semitism – we must be doing something to cause it", he tells Sullivan.

Yet as he pieces together more of the evidence, of the dead woman's involvement in gunrunning to Israel in 1946, of a list of others involved who might now be in danger too, Gold begins to feel the tug of a connection. He starts to follow the evidence as if it might constitute a personal map.

GROFAZ, he is told, is an acronym, a term used in Nazi propaganda towards the end of the war to refer to Hitler ("the Greatest Strategist of All Time"), that has now been adopted as the codeword for a new anti-Semitic organisation. He is persuaded to join the conspiracy against this conspiracy, only to find that it is impossible to belong both to these militant People of the Book and the forces of law and order. GROFAZ, in the end, cannot be substantiated; what can be is a brand of pigeon feed (we see a pigeon coop on the roof where Gold hunts the sniper) called 'GROFAZT'.

Nothing is proved either way, of course: the anti-Semitic conspiracy might still exist. But in trying to prove it, Gold has let down his other 'family', in particular Sullivan, who dies in a shoot-out with the villain they've been pursuing throughout. It's an ironic coda that is common to the cop movie, where the policeman's lot is often an impossible

one and the course of justice never runs smooth.

In an interview in *Time Out* (1989), Mamet has stressed the genre sources of *Homicide*. "Traditionally, cop movies either picture them as stoics, which is to say as philosophers to whom nothing is more important in life than doing right – doing right as the utmost happiness – or the plot gives them some kind of personal reason for doing their job, like their partner gets killed or their family terrorised. I've used all these routines shamelessly". Indeed he has, but he has strangely rerouted them: the usual personal, social or institutional pressures become more contained and emblematic; in the end his characters always play on a solipsistic stage and eventually gather its darkness into themselves.

One film that makes instructive comparison with *Homicide* is Don Siegel's *Madigan*, where the need for self-justification, the need, in cop-movie parlance, to be 'the first one through the door', drives Richard Widmark's hero. But during the two days *Madigan* has to recover the police revolver he loses at the beginning, his story intertwines with other characters – up and down the police hierarchy, across the social scale – who face similar crises of self-confidence and lost honour. By the end, there's a certain irony about the theme, a certain wryness about *Madigan*'s personal quest. His need is extended, shaded, qualified by all the other lives the film has touched on and incorporated as mini-themes. *Madigan*'s existential crisis becomes everyone's, in a non-denominational, across-the-board way.

From light into darkness

In *Homicide*, the undoing of Officer Gold seems a particularly cruel joke, and it's a derisive Mamet touch that it should be done through a play on words. It's this which distinguishes the film from other cop movies – the definition of character and situation, loyalties and conflicts, not through action (or even narrative in the usual sense) but through language – and it is a powerful membrane for holding individuals together. In the first part of *Homicide*, dialogue is a ritualistic exchange of catchphrases and complaints, abuse and reassurance, between the members of Gold's squad. But it's an elusive medium for an individual, like Gold, suddenly provoked to define who, exactly, he is. Visiting the bereaved family, he can't tell whether they're speaking Yiddish or Hebrew.

The verbal directness of this conflict certainly makes *Homicide* seem Mamet's most theatrical film to date. Eventually Gold is driven to answer the question people keep pushing at him with a speech in which he acknowledges that being

a policeman, a member of one team, is linked to his negative feelings about being a member of another. Specifically, "They said I was a pussy because I was a Jew". So Gold has compensated both by trying to seem tougher than anyone else ("All my life I got to be the first one through the door... because I'm nobody"), and by turning that sense of weakness, of being an outsider, into his role. Jewishness and being like a woman have qualified him to become the 'mouthpiece' of the squad, the hostage negotiator, "because I knew how the bad guys felt".

The sense of theatre here comes not just from the flow of words but from the dramatic movement and even the look of the film. This becomes increasingly stark, a drive from cause to effect, from scene to scene, that is cleaner and more clipped than one is used to in naturalistic crime films. (Compare, for instance, the dense narrative texture of Sidney Lumet's *Q&A*, which deals with a similar issue of institutionalised racism in the police force.) Gold is isolated between the two groups – Jews and police – in a situation where no narrative resolution, and not much elaboration, is possible. He must choose between his squad members and the Jewish activists who then ask for some proof of identity and allegiance. Gold is only too willing to prove it, because again his sense of identity is tied up with being obliging – "I want to help" – and he agrees to bomb a store which is a front for a neo-Nazi organisation and anti-Semitic printing house.

Or is it? The film raises doubts about the reality of what Gold discovers or is told by emphasising the sense of 'theatre' in another way – by giving many scenes a self-consciously staged look. When Gold enters the targeted premises, the scene is very neatly laid out: an antique printing machine in a back room, flanked by an American flag and a Nazi flag and backed by an enlarged photograph of a wartime atrocity. There are several possible interpretations. One is that Mamet's scene-setting is inevitably theatrical but thematically meaningless. Another is that Gold is being forced to enter a 'theatre' of the self by suddenly being confronted with what it means to be a Jew. And another is that the scene looks so stagy because he is being set up.

The 'set-up', of course, is endemic to the Mamet plot, and not just because the milieu is usually that of criminals or con men. Underlying

Mamet's theatre was waiting to find its consummation in cinema

Mamet's treatment of language, behaviour, family ties and group loyalties is the sense that meanings are unstable and that, at base, they are games. And games are always being played more or less consciously to deceive. Most extensive and fascinating in this regard is *House of Games* itself, Mamet's first film, which revealed ever more complicated pieces of trickery, until they all coalesced into one master con reaching back to the beginning of the film. To what end the Jewish organisation in *Homicide* might be ensnaring and taking advantage of Officer Gold scarcely matters, since in Mamet's scheme of things to belong is both a need and a weakness. In this world of (virtually) all-male competitiveness, macho fears are both parodied and reinforced.

And two worlds became one

In an interview in *City Limits* (1987), at the time that he was making the transition to film director, Mamet was in no doubt that his new métier would be a change from the old. "Writing for the screen is completely different. You're basically trying to make up pictures and you only resort to dialogue when you can't make up the perfect picture, I think". If this is true, then it would seem to be further proof that the three films Mamet has directed are theatre rather than film. The flow of words has continued unabated, and the catchphrases of the con men in *House of Games* become an ear-catching sing-song: "The man can't play, he should stay away"; "It happens to the best, it happens to the rest". But it is also true that the cinema is quite accommodating to elements that are non-cinema, and that the stylisation of Mamet's dialogue may have resulted in a stylised cinema that, thematically, serves the same ends. It could even be said that Mamet's theatre was waiting to find its consummation in the cinema.

Mamet's language, of course, is what has made him famous, his ear for vernacular, or for language that has been coded for particular uses – by con men, hustlers, petty criminals, a psychotherapist and other trick cyclists. It is a language that has been invented to manipulate and deceive, and so it always has a certain formality, a delight in the parables by which characters get from A back to A. Words are pushed and shunted through speeches with an assertiveness, a concreteness, that often seems to give them a reality – an independent life – greater than anything they might be referring to.

But this is only to say that words contain their own reality; that they embody fictions and fantasies that are traded back and forth, in a world whose reality is always open

In Mamet's scheme of things to belong is both a need and a weakness

to negotiation. Most peculiarly, the reality, concreteness or truthfulness of whatever is being said often seems self-consciously detached from whoever is saying it. The dialogue of Mamet's plays, on the page, is full of italics and quotation marks, even individual verbs and pronouns being given that questioning emphasis, as if to suggest that there's no statement so simple it can't be turned to mean something else, and that no one in this world would want, syntactically, to limit their options.

In *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Mamet's play about real-estate men, the possibility of stealing 'leads' (possible clients) from their own firm and selling them to another just sort of materialises between two salesmen: "Are you actually talking about this, or are we just..."; "No, we're just..."; "We're just 'talking' about it"; "We're just speaking about it. As an idea"; "We're not actually talking about it... as a robbery"; "As a 'robbery'?! No". The upshot of this is that what one man thinks of as an 'abstract' discussion, the other unilaterally decides to make 'concrete', and claims his colleague as an accomplice in crime "because you listened".

This slipperiness of language, the way in which it can even slip away from its user, easily inspires a cinematic ambiguity, a play of deceptive surfaces, of deliberately 'rigged' appearances, teasing the viewer to decode the unreality to discover whatever reality might lie beneath. Images don't have to replace words but can set further quotation marks round them, can do even more, in fact, to emphasise those separations – thoughts from actions, words from feelings, intentions from consequences – that are always Mamet's subject. In this respect, *House of Games* looks like a Hitchcockian film, but one in which no Hitchcockian reference (kleptomaniac heroine notwithstanding) was intended. It's even conceivable that the film has gone one better than the Master.

An argument has been made (*Film Quarterly*, 1990) that *House of Games* is not only about the elaboration of a 'master con' but about the working through of the heroine's compulsions and their therapeutic resolution. In this view, the final scene at the airport, the least realistic in the film (and, by extension, the most Hitchcockian in its levels of artifice), does not actually happen: that Dr Margaret Ford (Lindsay Crouse) does not shoot her con man/lover/tormentor, but is simply completing a process of identification and

projection in her mind, begun at the start of the film when she interviews a girl who has murdered an authority figure, her father.

But if this is true, then it is also possible that the therapeutic process reaches further back into the film, that it is an alternative narrative to the con man's game – a feminine alternative to the masculine one. The "House of Games", in other words, is Dr Ford's invention, the staging ground for her therapy, 'conceived' in the first part of the film where she is forever writing. Her disconnected notes on the patient who leads her to the gambling den also have an obvious relevance to herself: "Compulsive succeeds in establishing a situation where he is out of control... The character of Mike – the 'Unbeatable Gambler'. Seen as omniscient, who 'doles out punishment'". Again, the quotation marks, and the use of the upper case, signal the separation of a character from herself, her actions and her understanding of herself. It's a separation that explains why Mamet has not adapted his theatrical world to the cinema, but has simply recreated one within the other.

Between heaven and hell

It is not surprising to discover that the games which are so important in Mamet's plays and films are also significant in the way he goes about his work. In his introduction to the published script of *House of Games*, he declares, "Gambling was endemic in the cast and crew. One sequence of the film is a poker game, and many of us, for the week that sequence took, spent twelve hours a day in a staged poker game and the remaining twelve in a real one". By making a benign game of work, Mamet makes it possible to imagine all the malign consequences of game-playing in human behaviour.

But benign games may not be that far removed from malign ones. Or they may contain rather interesting thematic clues of their own. Mamet talks about the many on-set gags that were played on *House of Games*, whose object were "almost invariably Lindsay Crouse". Of these his favourite was the 'Spawning Salmon'. "Crouse did a scene on a bench overlooking an embankment overlooking Elliott Bay. She's supposed to be staring out to sea, and we sent a production assistant down below the embankment. On cue he was to heave this ten-pound salmon up into the air, where it lands at her feet. You can see it on the Joke Reel, but Crouse is staring a few degrees off to the side, and concentrating on her acting, and she didn't actually see the salmon". Something very like that salmon is the pigeon feed that ends up in the lap of Officer Gold at the end of *Homicide*.

● To recoin a phrase: "Those who cannot learn from history are destined to repeat it – on Channel 4". Earlier this year the BBC allowed its classic *Play for Today* series from the 70s to be reshown on the fourth channel – so permitting a rival to exhibit its best past work, while at the same time itself abusing that work's legacy in a truly terrible season of television films in *Screen One*. Perhaps more ironically, since the early 80s the BBC has had an unstated policy *not* to repeat any of its television films, so that despite the fact that *Screen One* films won BAFTAs two years running, neither piece (both made by Les Blair) has had a second showing.

Yet many of the *Screen One* films have not merited revival. And as the recent series of *Screen One* ended, one couldn't help registering how even the successful films highlight not only the shortcomings of the season as a whole, but also the confusion surrounding the idea of the television film.

Al Hunter's *Alive and Kicking*, which tells how soft-at-heart drug dealer Lennie Henry kicks his habit with the help of wisecracking drugs counsellor Robbie Coltrane, wins us over with its smart dialogue and buddy movie intimacy. But it also points up the art film langour of Adrian Hodges' *Tell Me that You Love Me*, in which a thirtysomething woman is torn between a two-timing (but at least he's honest) old boyfriend and a new lover, who is romantic, responsible and, of course, in this 'deconstruction' of 'sexist' myths, ends up nearly murdering her. This work neatly demonstrates all that is wrong with *Screen One* films: superficially socially engaged (in its sexual politics), shoddily cinematic, with plenty of *film noir* shadow-play and glossy beauty, but without believable characters or plot progression.

Prince, Julie Burchill's tale of a girl's mid-60s childhood in a household where the dog is the real man about the house, embodies within it *Screen One*'s problems. It tries to be sharp and naturalistic – with plenty of sulky growing pains and a French mother crossing her legs when woman-hating Prince won't let her go

upstairs to the toilet – and at the same time fantastic and seductive (Prince gives an MGM lion's roar at the opening and close of the film), with overgorgeous period clothes and furniture. These conflicts between langour and sharpness, grand ambitions and more human-scale intentions run through the whole series.

In moving to television films, the BBC shifted away from the single television drama of *Play for Today* and *The Wednesday Play*, which with its showcasing of works by new playwrights replaced the network's previous policy of transmitting West End plays and the classics. This had begun to change before *The Wednesday Play* was launched, and Don Thompson, a director at the time, has argued that *The Wednesday Play* marked the end of the BBC's commitment to original, purely artistic, difficult single dramas (Sydney Newman, the then new BBC controller of drama, gets the blame for this in Thompson's book, *Days of Vision*). Thompson's viewpoint is a useful antidote to television's Golden Agers, but he fails to acknowledge the degree to which *The Wednesday Play* and *Play for Today* succeeded in developing the single television drama into a popular, sophisticated and rich form.

Writers like Roy Minton, Colin Welland, Peter Terson, William Trevor and Alan Plater, as well as directors Alan Clarke, Les Blair, Ken Loach and Philip Saville (of *Boys from the Blackstuff* fame) cut their teeth on drama which was socially engaged and broadly liberal-left. This description also covers names such as David Mercer and Dennis Potter, who, even if more experimental, tended to root their work in a hardy social reality. David Rudkin is perhaps the most memorable voice whose work was not of this kind, but as *Play for Today* producer, Ann Shubik, notes, audiences were largest when the plays had a 'documentary' (that is, realist) feel to them, and smallest when they were stylistically complicated.

There is certainly a particular type of single television drama which people seem to remember fondly from this period. Its subjects are poverty, madness, inadequate relationships,

generational conflicts, nationality, sex and class. And its form is overtly realist: it does not refer to other art forms or other television or film genres, though, of course, it does utilise those genres' conventions. In displaying a comprehensible pattern of development, however, the single television drama was similar to other forms of programme such as the cop serial, the sitcom or the soap opera. In other words, it was *televisual* – conforming to accepted technical and artistic limitations and possibilities and able to sit as happily in the studio or on video as on film or on location.

To what extent are *Screen One*'s television films reneging on this heritage? Certainly, it's clear that these films' relationship to their politics is very different. Umberto Eco has remarked of films by Coppola and Spielberg that there is nothing to say about them because whatever is in them has been self-consciously placed there by their directors. Eco was talking about filmic references and polished thrills and spills, but the same is true of the inbuilt politics of *Screen One* films. Like an analyst who continually tries to forestall the analyst's interpretations by offering his or her own, a film such as *Filipina Dreamgirls*, Andrew Davies' account of a group of Welshmen going to the Philippines to pick themselves wives, thinks it knows everything there is to know about its own ideology – we don't need group organiser Bill Maynard's dressing-down of his charges at the end to guide us. Hodges' *Tell Me that You Love Me* has similar problems – it is about the position a woman can occupy between male duplicity and male idolatry and not about anything else. Its ideological ambivalence is its narrative.

It is possible for films to be controlled by a certain ideological remit and still work (indeed, this was not the main problem with *Filipina Dreamgirls*). But despite the overt perspective of these films, their politics is never foregrounded. For a film such as *Tell Me that You Love Me* not to mention sexual politics explicitly is like *Last Tango in Paris* not mentioning sex. And instead of looking political, the film ►

Small pleasures

With a rich history of drama, television embarked on film in the 80s. Reviewing 'Screen One', Andrew Clifford wonders what sort of beast the television film really is



◀ looks 'arty': beautiful actors, wonderful sets and an over-eager steadycam. It's as though being artistic was political enough.

Perhaps this is why *Screen One* films tend to be 'cinematic' in such a strange way – as if their pictures and images had a role independent of their narrative. Although set in specific periods and locations, the films are curiously timeless and spaceless: what we recall is the liquidity of the images. For example at the end of Tony Smith's *Hancock*, the comic is seen giving a press conference in Australia (where, two years later, he will kill himself); as he speaks, his voice gets weaker and he gradually disappears within a white screen fade. This is a striking device, but as it hasn't been echoed by related fades in the rest of the film, it seems independent of it and deadening, leaving the viewer with a feeling of torpor when the film should presumably be harrowing and engaged.

Similarly the hues and shadows of the scene in which the heroine of *Tell Me that You Love Me* first meets her romantic lover-to-be – who looks as though he is about to walk into an advertisement – hardly seem in unison with what, if read in a newspaper, would be a gruelling case about a madman with bloody murder in his head. It's almost as if television films are about how they look, as though the look itself is a plot device. ("We're different because we look different from the rest of television", they seem to say.) This 'artistic radicalism', divorced from politics and taking its cue from the most superficial grasp of cinematic language, has replaced the political radicalism that characterised the single television drama.

Indeed, these films seek to be overtly 'cultural' rather than political; they are centred on the kings and queens of modern culture, who are ensconced in key ideological power positions and focus certain contemporary debates. Yuppies, for example, make perfect television film heroes because they have tragic ideological flaws slipped in, as it were, with their unjustifiably large pay packets. *Tell Me that You Love Me* and Paul Seed's *Ex* are both about yuppies; the girl in *Prince* grows up into one. *Hancock* is



Masterful dog (and man) in Burchill's 'Prince'

It's as if television films are about how they look, as though the look itself is a plot device

another kind of cultural king who embodies the Profumo period; his demise is at one with the permissive, lost looseness of the 60s, the seediness below the glamour – a tale we know rather well.

These highly self-conscious films love pulp and popular genres: references to *film noir*, British sitcom, World War Two and 60s pop movies abound. *Prince* and *Ex* successfully refer to other genres (sitcoms and soap operas, respectively), but the ludicrous *film noir* mannerism of *Tell Me that You Love Me* shows up how empty this can be. As the tension mounts and we realise that the heroine is to be threatened physically by her Romeo, we are supposed to think back to *film noir*'s overwrought accounts of sexual conflict. Instead, we cringe at the smugness of it all: "Ah, yes, but I mean the exact opposite of that oppressive little genre", the film seems to be announcing.

To what degree are these features a departure from the single television drama? There is no doubt that the best of *Screen One* films – *Ex* and *Alive and Kicking* – are essentially televisual: realist, character- and plot-based and with relatively unambitious themes and direction. The most disappointing are overenthusiastic exam-

ples of the television film as a distinct form (*Hancock* and *Tell Me that You Love Me*, though the former is an infinitely more worthwhile piece than the latter).

But the single television drama did need to be taken into the 80s and 90s, and some of the features of the television film can be fruitful for this. *Ex*, in which Gryff Rhys Jones suffers the romantic and moral tribulations of a modern divorcee, is absorbing in a televisual way, but part of its appeal lies in the beauty of its filming, the power positions of the characters and its farce/soap opera feel. It is a bright, clever, modern film, which has heeded its televisual legacy and moved on. *Alive and Kicking*, on the other hand, is dragged down by being too moral and issue-ridden in a typical *Play for Today* way. The script and direction too often close in on the grainy horror of drug addiction; the film's strengths lie in the slightly whacko patter of Henry and Coltrane.

In *Filipina Dreamgirls*, Les Blair also clings too much to a televisual style. The direction lacks a filmic gusto that would lift it into the realm that Andrew Davies' script demands. The music, for example, is tinny and jolly, rather like that of film versions of television sitcoms such as *Bless This House*; something ironically symphonic is needed to add the necessary pathos, disgust and yearning and put the script on a bolder platform.

The magic suburbanism of *Prince* works because it roots itself in a limited realism. But the film's balancing act between the fantastic and the sitcom mundane needs more of both: more tautness; a sense of a political reality outside itself; an ending in the 60s rather than the 80s (though the end is fascinating); more 'madness'. Burchill is trying not to tip either way, yet the best moments are when the film does just that – the MGM Alsatian on the one hand, or on the other the realist turmoil when the mother goes mad at having to be the iron in a game of Monopoly.

The television film could be seen as an interesting 80s attempt to update the single television drama. After all, what is it if not Thatcherite to centralise your narratives, install cultural kings and queens into them, sublimate social forces to a constricting ideology without ever coming out and saying why, and display a yearning for the caricature surfaces of earlier art forms. But like Thatcherism, or rather a calcified idea of what Thatcherism was, such strategies are founded on an inaccurate analysis. Just as Thatcher won only limited victories socially and economically, so Thatcherism did not take hold of the way people think and feel as thoroughly as the counterattacking form of the television film suggests.

As to the future, there is surely room for optimism. The television film has been on an excursion and forgotten where it came from. But if it's vital that it returns to its televisual roots, it's also true that its experimentation during the 80s has left it in a strong position to redevelop its form in any direction it chooses. There is a chance here for history to stop repeating itself and start remaking itself.



'Alive and Kicking': Lenny Henry and Robbie Coltrane in buddy movie intimacy

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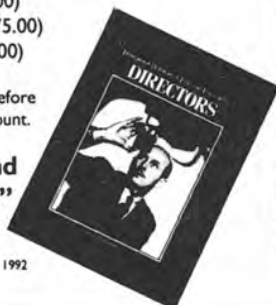
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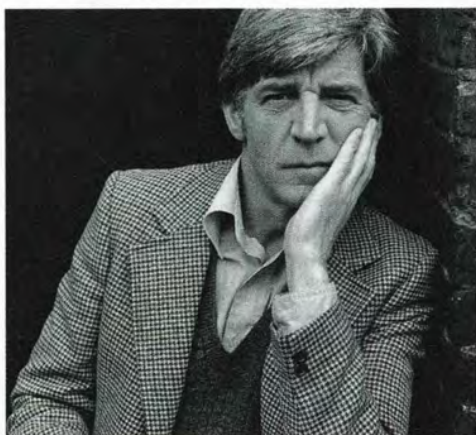
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His ain man

The anger, the passionate intensity and the singular vision of Bill Douglas are remembered here by Mamoun Hassan, who worked with the director on the Trilogy films



JAMIE BROWN

The happiest I have ever known Bill Douglas was on our first day at the 1972 Venice Film Festival. Our rooms at the Hôtel des Bains on the Lido, the setting for *Death in Venice*, had been given away and we were re-booked into a hotel in Venice itself. A beautiful white launch crewed by two matelots in striped shirts sped us across the bay towards that magical skyline of Canaletto and Turner. Bill, his hair streaming in the breeze, laughed and laughed: "If only they could see me in Newcraighall now". Four days later *My Childhood* won the Silver Lion. I should have been able to add that his career took off. But we were living in Britain. Over the next nineteen years, one of the few authentic voices of British cinema made only three more films.

Bill's 'Trilogy' was, in fact, the result of a sleight of hand. When I took over from Bruce Beresford as head of production for the BFI in the summer of 1971, he had left me two piles of scripts on the desk: one, very tall, of rejects and one, very small, of possibles. On top of that pile was a script by Bill Douglas entitled *Jamie*. I had never read anything like it. No standard 'slug' line for each scene - ext/int, location, day/night - spare description of setting, no emotional padding. Instead, the 'facts' of the shot were implicit. There was no depiction of an event which would somehow be filmed, but a series of images and sounds which, simply and concisely, communicated feeling. It was visual storytelling. It was cinema.

We gave him most of the money in the kitty, £3,500, which included the maximum personal grant of £150. At the very first rushes, he announced himself. His commitment in the scripting had carried over into the shooting. ►

Undefeated: Bill Douglas in 1979 at the height of his success, above; in 'My Childhood' (1972) Jamie stares out beyond the bars, right





◀ There was no coverage of scenes from different angles; uncompromising, he went for the unique shot. And each shot had an intense clarity of line and feeling. He was a poet.

I realised that the industry was not ready to back Bill. The BFI presented a different problem. At that time the BFI Action Committee was pressing the governors to support collective film-making. The committee was opposed to feature films and would have raged against anything so undemocratic as giving two grants to one film-maker. One 'solution' put forward captures the spirit perfectly: that the applicants should spend half a day discussing the "economic, social, political and aesthetic" consequences of their work.

I was wondering how to back Bill's next film in such a destructive climate when the answer came in a roundabout way. Bill, encouraged by Lindsay Anderson to admit the nature of his film, changed the title to *My Childhood*. I jumped at this. With the echo of the two great childhood trilogies of Ray and Gorki, I felt I could sell the board the idea that we had not supported a whole film, but only part of a film – the first part of a trilogy – and that we were already half-committed to the other two parts. The chairman, Sir Michael Balcon, and Stanley Reed, then director of the BFI, supported the wheeze. And so the Trilogy was born.

Directors of films are like conductors. One way or another, they have to get the orchestra to play their way. Toscanini did it through terror, Bruno Walter through benign persuasion, Bill through communicating pain. During the writing he described the shot as it played in his head; during the shooting he did not have to find it, he had to re-create it. It was, he would say, and he believed it, 'Simple Simon'. However, it didn't leave much room for collaboration. Later, when he taught at the National Film and Television School, he put it succinctly: to ignore a bad suggestion is easy; to ignore a good suggestion that is irrelevant is what makes a director. If he didn't get the shot he wanted, both he and the unit paid for it. He would literally go mad. It was never a performance; he was not a *prima donna*. He didn't care much for status or money – it was the work. Still, I wanted to kill him sometimes. I was determined that nobody should do it but me.

Even now my children remember being woken at unearthly hours with calls from the Bill Douglas front. At 2am, after the first day's shooting on *My Ain Folk*, Peter Harvey, the sound engineer, rang me from Scotland. "Bill's breaking up – we need a psychiatrist. He only did one set-up today. The crew want to go home". I promised to join them the following day. When I arrived in Newcraighall everything seemed absolutely normal. Bill was cheerful, the crew co-operative, but although it was past 10am I noticed that the slate showed Scene 2 take 3. I cancelled the shooting for the day. Bill quickly agreed. The crew were all keen to tell me what had happened, but I wanted to hear it from Bill.

For the rest of that day Bill was at his most charming and relaxed. I was beginning to won-

der whether he would ever get to the point. I needn't have worried. The next morning Bill joined us at breakfast looking ashen grey: he was cooked and ready. He sat down and pointed at Peter Harvey. "I want Mr Harvey to pay for my typewriter". He suddenly sounded very Scottish. "He made me throw it at the bedroom wall". The crew started to find their cereal bowls extremely interesting. "How did he do that?", I asked. "He ruined my shot". Bill explained that on the first scene – where the officers fight violently with the boys to try to take them to the Home – the sound tape had got twisted on the final and 'perfect' take. Ludicrously rational, I said, "That's your responsibility, Bill. If you'd killed someone, would Peter go to jail?" "He's ruining my film!" He waved wildly. "I won't work with them". "That's the best crew I can find. If they're not good enough, cancel the film. I'll ring the chairman".

Even now I don't know whether I was bluffing. I made for the public telephone in the alcove. As I started to dial, I heard a thundering of feet. Bill was rushing towards me, the crew following behind. He took the phone from my hand and tied the cable round his neck. "You're ruining my life", he cried. "Don't. Don't do it". Stupidly, I found myself saying, "Pull yourself together, Bill". Eight hard days later I left Edinburgh. As the plane took off, I breathed oxygen.

Bill's style matured on *My Ain Folk*. He used to say: "Never show the audience something they can imagine better than you can show it". It's a motto that should be on the entrance to every film and television studio. His style consisted in creating gaps between scenes – scenes which were often single shots – which the audience would mentally have to jump across. It made them run; it was exhilarating. In *My Childhood*, for instance, the scene of Tommy beating up Jamie cuts to the boys and the grandmother sitting in front of the fire and then Tommy puts his arm affectionately round Jamie's shoulder. Sometimes he went too far and created a gap which the audience couldn't or didn't want to cross. But at his best, as in this section from *My Ain Folk*, he touched the sublime:

"The frightened boy runs out of the house followed closely by a mad Mrs Knox, knife in hand. But she doesn't pursue Jamie. Instead she makes for the house immediately next door. She bangs her fist on the door.

"Mrs Knox – 'Ya whore, ya whore, ya whore. Bitch! Bitch! Bitch! Bitch out of hell!"

"Jamie running away. Disappears over the brow of a hill.

"Jamie, his hand held by a policeman, returns to Mrs Knox's house. The policeman knocks on the door.

"Classroom. A rear view of children behind desks. They are singing. Jamie is finally isolated. 'Summer suns are glowing / Over land and sea / Happy light is flowing / Bountiful and free / Everything rejoices / In the mellow rain / Earth's one thousand voices / Join the sweet refrain'

"Jamie has wet the floor. All the children front view.

'All good gifts around us / Are sent from ►



Filmography

born 17 April, 1937
died 18 June, 1991

My Childhood (1972)
My Ain Folk (1973)
My Way Home (1978)
Comrades (1986)

The Trilogy

In a bleak Scottish mining village, towards the end of the war, eight-year-old Jamie lives with his maternal grandmother and older brother, Tommy. With no inkling of who his real parents are, Jamie has befriended a German prisoner of war, Helmuth, who works in the neighbouring fields. For his birthday, Tommy is given a canary in a cage by a man he believes is his father, but the boy has to rescue the bird from his vengeful





grandmother. He later destroys the family cat when it eats the bird.

Jamie meanwhile watches another man whom Tommy has pointed out to him as his own father. One day his grandmother takes Jamie to visit his mother, a patient in a mental hospital. Helmuth disappears when the war ends, and Jamie fears that his grandmother has died when she collapses one day. Rushing to the railway, he jumps on to the roof of a train as it leaves the village.

With grandmother's death, Tommy is taken away by the welfare authorities. Jamie escapes to the home of his paternal grandmother and uncle; he is allowed to stay, although his grandmother resents his presence, declaring that his mother destroyed her son's life. This, Jamie's father,

is the man he gradually realises is living next door with another woman and another son. Jamie's mother dies in the asylum, but he enjoys some fellow feeling with his paternal grandfather (also bitterly resented by the grandmother, for the 'sweetheart' he has had for many years in the village).

Jamie's uncle has an affair with Agnes, the woman with whom Jamie's father is living; Jamie's father leaves town with yet another woman. The grandfather dies and Jamie, unprotestingly, is taken away in the welfare van.

Circa 1950. Jamie is collected by his father from a welfare institution in Edinburgh.

He returns to his home town but is uncomfortable with his father's new wife and at odds with her own son, Archie. He is drawn

Beyond pastoral: Jamie and his grandmother in 'My Childhood', above; Jamie in the endless, empty streets of 'My Ain Folk', left

back to his paternal grandmother, although her feelings towards him are still ambivalent.

Jamie resists being apprenticed to the local colliery, declares his wish to study art, and returns of his own accord to the welfare home. The sympathetic warden finds him a job and eventually a foster home, but Jamie runs away, living rough. He later returns to his village to find his father's home deserted.

He spends his National Service in Egypt, and meets the educated Robert, who reawakens his interest in art. As they are about to return to Britain, Robert invites Jamie to come and stay with him.

◀ heaven above / So thank the Lord / Oh thank the Lord / For all his love'.

"And as the singing continues we see what will become of the children.

"We are in the cage, inside the pit shaft gate. Once more we are leaving behind the good light and once more the black earth is rushing up to shut it out.

"Miners' faces in the darkness of the cage. Blackness. Pinpoints of light from the miners' headlamps bob up and down and reflections of the lights break up in the dark water".

Bill gave the script to very few people. He felt that everyone who read it became a kind of director, pulling in a different direction. Actors were given their scenes on the day. His reasons were broadly Bressonian, but also, as he used a mixture of professionals and non-actors, this approach put them on an equal footing, resulting in a consistent style. I felt that secretly actors liked his way of working. Particularly as there were hardly any lines to learn on the day.

I was present when Helena Gloag, who played Mrs Knox, confronted Bill. "Paul [Kermack, who played her son] tells me that in the film he has an affair with the lady next door. Why didn't you tell me, when I did that scene outside?" Bill was unmoved. "How would it have helped you?" She considered this for a while and admitted, "It wouldn't have".

I left the BFI and went abroad, the funding of *My Way Home* secured. When I returned Bill had finished the Trilogy and was a world name. At home, he did not receive a single offer. I gave him a job in my department at the National Film and Television School, teaching screenwriting and directing. This essentially shy and private man turned out to be an inspired, and much loved, teacher. His influence can be seen today in the work of many film-makers.

Another impact is less known. I had persuaded Stanley Reed, Michael Balcon and the

chairman of the BFI, Denis Forman, to concentrate on feature film production. Denis secured government finance by pointing to Bill's success and to the fact that a film costing only a few thousand could command such respect.

In 1977, Bill and I talked about his adapting the Scottish classic, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Bergman and Mackendrick, among others, had tried and failed to crack it. It was not until 1979, when I was managing director of the National Film Finance Corporation, that I was in a position to help. Before I was able to commission him, a friend sent me a treatment of *Justified Sinner* written by a young writer. Perhaps lacking the necessary ruthlessness, Bill and I agreed to give him time to try his luck and, instead, the NFFC commissioned Bill to write *Comrades*. It was on the NFFC pending list for more than four years before Jeremy Isaacs and Channel 4 put up the balance to make it.

What one needs most in British cinema, apart from a ten cent cigar, is three lifetimes. Eleven years later, I commissioned Bill to write *Justified Sinner*. I am not alone in thinking that it is Bill's best script. In their wisdom, all the British sources of finance have passed on it. But they did give me advice. Lots of it.

Sadly, the frustration and disappointment over *Justified Sinner* strained our friendship. I hope that when the film is made – and it will be – I can, in my mind at least, make peace with him.

Bill lived the kind of life that some comfortably-off people feel artists deserve. He never made any money, and life was tough. God knows what it would have been like without the support of his companion, Peter Jewel. But he had his vision. Even when he was at his most impossible, a part of me stood aside and cheered him on: to set aside the reasonable and the possible, to reject compromise, to fight for that vision.

The way home

Don't mourn, but analyse, demands John Caughie, Scottish film historian, as he looks at the films of Bill Douglas

Along with genuine feelings of personal sadness and loss, there has been, in much of the writing and talking about Bill Douglas since his death on 18 June 1991, a distinct whiff of institutional guilt. Typically it is covered by anecdotes of his intensity and obsessive inability to compromise, or by a curious celebration of the impossibility of working with the man on the set. But underneath the anecdotes lurks guilt.

The obsession and the impossibility become the marks of a peculiar genius which the industry wasn't big enough to handle or to find a place for. Almost twenty years of film-making produced three short films, *My Childhood*, *My Ain Folk* and *My Way Home*; one very long one, *Comrades*; and a great deal of pain and frustration with projects which everyone admired but no one would fund.

Closer to my own academic home, there is room for a shadow of guilt, too. Mistaken when they first appeared as yet more British humanist realism, the films that make up the Trilogy slipped through the theoretical and political net with which many of us trawled in the 70s: too individualistic to point to film as a social practice, and too realist to open the way to the avant-garde whose absence had always (has always) deformed British film culture and whose advent was eagerly awaited after the events of 1968.

Bill Douglas escaped the attention (he may have been relieved) of the academic study of film which was rising as he was making his early movies. His name does not appear in the standard academic collections on British film history; it appears in one line in a list of film-makers in Roy Armes' *Critical History of British Cinema*, and to the best of my knowledge he was never written about in the standard academic journals. He was reviewed at the time, even championed, by Derek Malcolm and Philip French, but he avoided academic canonisation and the mixed blessing of becoming a good teaching text.

Speaking, from home again, you could expect this of English film-makers, critics and teachers – but in Scotland? While Bill Forsyth started a 'school' of Forsythean comedy, the 'school' of Douglas has not been copied, far less developed. In 1982, when a group of us tried to build a polemic to attack the debilitating traditions of kailyard and tartanry, we 'forgot' Bill Douglas, whose films stand in the same necessarily destructive relationship to the filmic



Anger and frustration beyond repair: Jamie in 'My Ain Folk'

kailyard tradition as the anti-kailyard novels of Hay and Brown stand to the gentler kailyard literature of Barrie and Crockett. In my own teaching, it wasn't until – somewhat as an afterthought and very belatedly – I showed *My Childhood* on a double bill with Terence Davies' *Distant Voices, Still Lives* that I realised what a central film it was. Fortunately, there is health in the growing attention to media studies in Scottish secondary schools, where the importance of Douglas for Scottish culture begins to be recognised.

Confession is, of course, good for the soul. But I have the feeling that the guilt that underpins the sense of loss at Bill Douglas' death could perpetuate the lack of critical engagement with his work. We must not allow him to remain an obsessive misfit or marginalised genius and fail to grasp the productive unease which his work creates within the more secure traditions of British film culture. Don't mourn: analyse.

The empty frame

There is a scene in *My Childhood* which sticks in my visual memory. It is the scene where Jamie heats a cup with hot water, empties the water out on to the table, and presses the warmed cup into his Grannie's frozen hands. More precisely: Tommy, the older brother, has brought home a bunch of dead and drooping flowers from his mother's grave. The scene opens with a close shot of the flowers in a cheap china cup sitting on a table whose furrowed grain echoes the textured wood which figures throughout the film in fences and doors.

In the second shot, Jamie, the central character of the Trilogy and the bearer of Bill Douglas' autobiographical investment, enters frame left. (Entrances from the edge of an empty frame are a feature of Douglas' style, formalising the structure of the scene – the film seems composed of scenes rather than sequences, framing relationships rather than developing actions – and establishing the space as place.) He crosses to the table, carrying a heavy kettle of boiling water, picks up the cup and tips out the dead flowers on to the floor.

This is all a single shot, with a very slight follow movement, lasting about twelve seconds. The third shot is a medium close-up static shot framing the cup, the kettle and, at the edge of the frame, Jamie's torso. His arm reaches into the frame; he picks up the kettle, pours water into the cup until it overflows, and then keeps pouring as the water spills all over the table. Still within the same static close-up, he picks up the cup and empties it on to the table, shaking out the drips. All we have seen of Jamie in the shot has been his



Aesthetic distance and intense intimacy: Bill Douglas at work

arm and part of his torso, and as he withdraws from the frame the camera lingers for a moment on the kettle; it and the cup have occupied the central space of the frame.

In a relatively quick long-shot of the Grannie's room – bare boards, empty grate in the black-lead stove, furniture broken up and wallpaper stripped to provide fuel for an occasional brief fire – Jamie crosses and kneels in front of his Grannie. She is dozing in her rocking chair, a black bundled-up shape in the particular contrasty black which characterises the film, only her white face and hair emerging from her shawl. There is a cut into a big close-up of Jamie's hands and Grannie's hands, a symmetry of composition. Jamie pushes the warm cup into his Grannie's numb fingers, closes her hands around it, holding her hands in his, patting them gently. Fade to black; end of scene; there has been no speech.

I am straining under the delusion that to describe a scene is to convey something about it. It never works. The scene takes about forty seconds, and that implies a condensation and concentration which description dissipates. But on the basis of the description, something can be said about this scene which may open out on to how the film and the Trilogy work, and why we need to understand Douglas better.

Following the Soviet montage stylists whom Douglas admired (Donskoi in particular), the scene, like the film as a whole, is built in blocks which exist in dialectical rather than causal relationship with each other. In many instances a change in the order of the scenes might damage the rhythm, but it wouldn't change the narrative. At the level of the scene, each block has its own shape, held characteristically in the film in a static camera or a still composition: a still life. The cup of dead flowers stands at the beginning of the scene as a parodic still life, linking this scene to the scene, a few shots earlier, of Tommy at his mother's graveside. More than that,

this opening image imports into the scene in rigidly condensed form the intense net of family relationships and misrecognitions: Tommy's dead mother, Jamie's mad mother, Tommy's father who is not, as Jamie thought he was, the same person as Jamie's father. When Jamie empties the dead flowers on to the floor, then, it is not simply an action, it is a gesture within that missing and confusing narrative.

The gesture of emptying out the flowers in the first shot is repeated in the next shot with the spilling of the water and the emptying of the cup. There is a senseless untidiness in these gestures, a wilful messing of one's own space which shocks my bourgeois sense of domestic propriety. What this does is to mark off this poverty as other: poverty not simply as a deprived version of everyday norms – the same, but less of it – but as a system which has developed other norms and rationalities; poverty as a peculiarity which is not simply given. The meaning of the scene, its rationality, only appears at the moment when Jamie presses the warmed cup into his Grannie's hands.

Unexpected closeness

Time and again within the film, the meaning of a scene does not refer simply to a particular version of the familiar, cannot be read along the lines of generic or cultural coding, but is built out of concrete bits of the lived experience of poverty. In that sense, scenes have to be read backwards, the wilful spilling of the water only cohering with the warming of the hands. In that sense also, many scenes have a surreal quality – Grannie wandering, distracted, in the fields with a dead crow wrapped in paper; the surrealism of memory fragments which do not hang together.

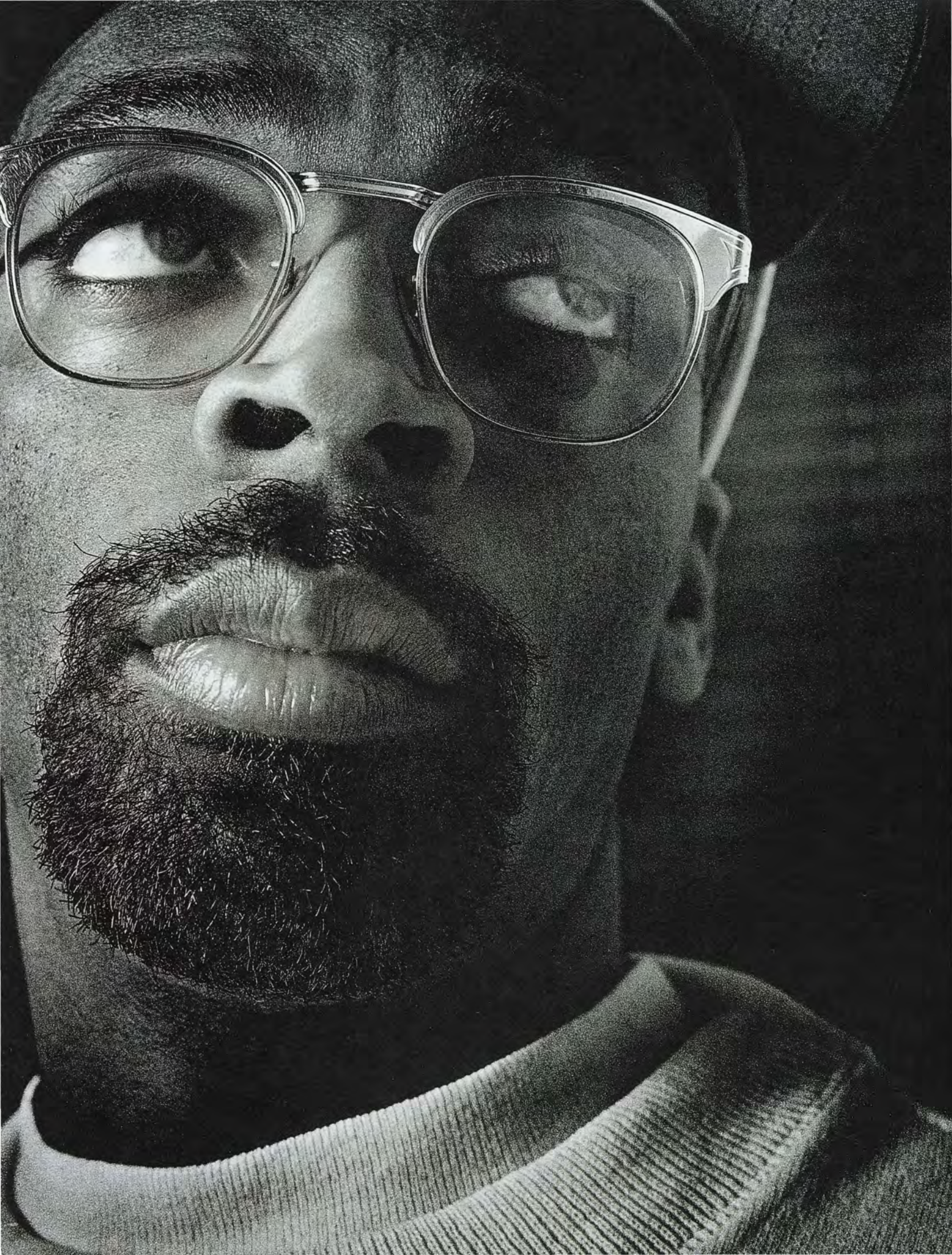
Like the actions within it, the scene is gestural rather than narrative, in the very precise sense in which Brecht and Benjamin talk of the *gestus*. It condenses a complex experience and a social and familial

context within a highly formalised, single action. Its formal restraint and understatement leave it to the spectator to complete the statement – an image of poverty seen 'as if for the first time'. Far from having anything to do with the British realist tradition, Douglas is working within the aesthetics of distanciation developed by Russian formalism, an aesthetics out of which Brecht also developed his own theory and practice.

But it is not simply about aesthetic distance. The scene ends with tenderness, Jamie's hands enclosing those of his Grannie, gently patting them and warming them. Images of tenderness are rare and fleeting in the film, and unanticipated within the surrounding grimness. A few scenes earlier, after a bitter fight between the two boys, there is a long shot across the room of the backs of the three 'family' members sitting around a fierce, brief fire. The shot is held until, just before the cut, Tommy's arm creeps round his brother's shoulder. The quick cut prevents any lingering on a moment of unexpected closeness (it was only on the second viewing – albeit on a VHS copy, that I noticed it).

In the last part of the Trilogy, *My Way Home*, there is a scene of Jamie and Robert in a rare moment of pleasure in the nonsense routines of National Service, which ends with an abrupt cut at the point at which Jamie has put his head against his friend's shoulders. Almost subliminal, again I had to replay to make sure that this moment of physical affection had taken place. The almost obsessive reticence which underplays these moments is not prurient, it is simply uncertain: a fragility within the films around the possibility of sustaining relationships. And yet these glimpsed moments ground the films emotionally, opening them to complex possibilities rather than burying them in easy despair.

Aesthetic distance and intense intimacy, then, is the dialectical tension which marks the Trilogy. Janus-faced, Bill Douglas seems to stand between the formal and visual rhetoric of silent cinema, particularly Soviet silent cinema, and the emotional intensity of the best of European art cinema. It is perhaps his Europeanness which made it so hard to recognise him as Scottish in the early 80s and which now makes him so important for Scottish and British cinema. Surrounded by a great deal of bland, marketable International Style, both in Europe and in Britain, Douglas' films seem to offer one possibility of an art cinema which is built from the experience of locality and from difficult and insecure histories.



'Get your own pizzeria' is hardly a rallying call for African-Americans, argues Paul Gilroy as he

examines the role of Spike Lee's cinema in the ethnic politics of the US. Portrait by Alastair Thain

Spiking the argument

● In a political culture which has looked, at least since the Harlem Renaissance, towards its artists for leadership, Spike Lee has been much more than a mere film-maker. Like the achievements of his sporting role models – Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan and Mike Tyson – Lee's activities have been endowed with a symbolic resonance that goes far beyond the artistic source of his notoriety. The reasons for his popularity, which is further fostered by Lee's visibility in and around his own films, are worth exploring. It makes sense to see his stardom as a product of the same catastrophe in black America to which his work is addressed.

There's something epochal about the way that black Americans both inside and outside the industry have rushed to identify with Lee. His art and his activities as an entrepreneur are both important here. His corner shop business schemes have put a stylish gloss on the old Garveyite adage "race first and self-reliance", but it is in his more celebrated role as a victim of media racism that Spike Lee has become a star. His public persona – a difficult mix of victim and hero – has increased the impact of his work on the lives of African-Americans at an especially difficult time in their history. The stresses of poverty, de-industrialisation, militarised law enforcement, Aids and crack cocaine have been largely unanswered by a system of formal politics that has proved incapable and often unwilling to try to change the terminal plight of blacks in US cities. This is a bleak situation in which the deepening crises of political leadership, ideology and direction in the black communities continue to take their toll. The strength of authoritarian organisations like the Nation of Islam is one symptom of this disaster. The rise of Spike Lee is another. Both give credence to the current African-American joke that the 90s are the 60s turned upside down.

Masculine bravado

Lee's black audience is invited to discover the pleasures of seeing its usually hidden and segregated social and cultural world exposed to the legitimating power of celluloid. It is com-

forted by Lee's ability to construct recognisable images of racial community, particularly where the forms of solidarity in cinematic circulation are scarce outside the movie theatre. Lee has orchestrated the display of this secret racial culture very carefully. The pleasures of its reception actively construct the feeling of community that black political discourse often just talks about. The beautiful poetic recitation of great musicians' names in *Do the Right Thing* is one relatively innocent example of these appeals to cultural insiderism.

But the inside cultural references with which the films are overloaded are less problematic than Lee's celebratory attempts to be faithful to behavioural and political traits drawn from the same culture. His capitulations to the demand that black life be revealed sentimentally, therapeutically and without criticism have grown more frequent. The early films hinted at other possibilities. There was great promise signalled in Lee's preparedness to tackle some of the divisive issues that inevitably arise to embarrass the romantic claims of racial rhetoric. But misogyny, homophobia and colour caste divisions all surfaced, only to disappear, like Bleek's mother in *Mo' Better Blues*, without being explored. It's interesting to recall how, in *Jungle Fever*, Flipper Purify's pleas for complexity become progressively more ridiculous each time he utters them. Turning those pleas into an absurdity is one more clue that Spike's world is animated by a campaign against difficulty, complexity and anything else that doesn't fit the binary codes of historic American racial thought to which he subscribes and on which his allegories now rely: Straight and Nappy, Jigaboos and Wannabees, Bensonhurst and Harlem, black and white.

Like Flipper, confronted by the horrific idea of the half-black half-white children his world cannot accommodate, even though he professes his love for one of them, Spike wavers when he squares up to untidy problems that resist this logic of simplification. The internal divisions that menace the integrity of the racial community get played down or ignored.

Old chestnuts like the responsibility of the artist in difficult conditions where that community provides strength and support as well as constraint ought not to be analysed. When asked to consider the big, awkward questions like the way that sexuality, gender identity and male domination can fracture race consciousness, Lee retreats into the dementia of racial absolutism and its protective shell of masculine bravado. The bold idea hinted at in *She's Gotta Have It* that gender conflict itself might establish the intensity with which racial identities are held has long been forgotten.

Within the Afro-centric thinking which currently dominates African-American political debate, it becomes impossible to criticise either the vernacular or Spike himself without confronting allegations of racial treachery. Spike is clearly most comfortable when meeting the joyous obligation to be affirmative or when engaged in sacramental repetition of the folklore and prejudices of the ghetto he has himself escaped. Any conscious dishonesty here is less significant than the loss of an opportunity truly to uplift the race by estranging it from the corrosive conservatism of its assumptions. These problems are most intense at the junction of racial populism and anti-racist aspirations. Apart from a few rogue right-wingers, American blacks have sought to hold on to and even to cultivate the idea of racial particularity as a salve to their chronic disempowerment. Through Spike's films, it is easy to see that their protestations of absolute cultural difference announce an affiliation to rather than disengagement from America and Americanism.

Image and sound

The youth cultural revolution prompted by the emergence of Hip Hop has made the claims of black exceptionalism seem plausible. It has strengthened Lee's hand less through his close association with Public Enemy than through the notion that his film-making has been guided by creative rules derived from musical forms and styles. Lee's work has certainly redefined the limits of the African-American public sphere, but the changes it has wrought in that sphere's internal character have probably helped to undermine rather than enhance the authority of music and musicians. Cinema has been moved closer to the centre of black popular culture and Spike's laudable and loving regard for that medium – refined in close co-operation with his director of photography, Ernest Dickerson – has done much to systematise a new relationship between image and sound in a culture in which the encoded sounds of speech and music have held a specially privileged place.

The problem of the limits to racial community has been inherent in Lee's work and in debates over its reception for a long time. The recent conflict over his newest project, a film on Malcolm X, brings this problem to the fore. In the current dispute, Spike's entitlement to make a film that explores Malcolm's life has been queried by political opponents, led by Amiri Baraka, who have challenged the film- ▶

maker's radicalism and good faith. The waspish tone of this disagreement is one that Lee himself has fostered. As the icon for black America's intermittently absent father, as well as a model for the varieties of responsible masculinity required to solve its current crises, Malcolm was always going to be a hot potato. Baraka, who has accused Lee of perpetuating negative stereotypes, is on record as saying: "We will not let Malcolm X's life be trashed to make middle-class Negroes sleep easier".

It is significant that the main issue here is perceived to be class. It expresses the realisation that like gender and sexuality, the growing economic divisions and cultural and ideological differences inside the black communities mean that even in the US there is not one single, closed and monolithic way of being, seeing, thinking and acting black. The same point is being made forcefully in the furore over Clarence Thomas succeeding Thurgood Marshall in the Supreme Court.

Writing about the politics of black cultural production in the late 30s, the author Richard Wright described the evolving pattern of class divisions among American 'Negroes' and struggled to evaluate the way these were being translated into different cultural and aesthetic forms. Wright argued that the choice available to the black artists of his day was between the narcissism of a middle class that had dominated black art and letters between the beginning of the century and the great depression, and the great promise of unknown vernacular forms. The latter grew in a seemingly spontaneous manner from the urban black poor, who sensualised their sufferings and turned the ineffable misery that flowed down the years from slavery into vital, if nihilistic, art.

Street style

Spike's popularity marks a point where this opposition could be reconciled, if not transcended. Through the antics of the pivotal, heroic personalities that Spike inhabits in his movies, the black middle class can be seen to take partial possession of vernacular style and expression. Mars, Halfpint, Mookie and Giant are thus revealed as emissaries in a process of cultural colonisation of which Mars Blackmon's afterlife as a Nike advertisement is the most insidious result. For through that character above all, Spike has set the power of street style and speech to work not just in the service of an imagined racial community, but to foster the idea of an imaginary blackness which exists exclusively to further the interests of corporate America. Whether or not these street-wise products induce young black men to murder one another, there are unresolved moral and political questions involved in our racial heroes endorsing overpriced shoes, even while wearing today's equivalent of a minstrel mask.

Analyses of life among the black poor calculate that without three generations of higher education, black families will lack the cultural and financial resources to withstand the pressures of de-industrialisation and downward mobility. This bald statistic puts Spike's recur-



Owning up: Mars in the Nike advertisement, endorsing corporate America, top; Mookie moves between the pizzeria and politics in 'Do the Right Thing', above

rent boast of being "a third generation Morehouse man" into a different perspective. The economic and historical patterns chronicled by writers like William Julius Wilson reveal the fragmentation of black communities into two parts: a small middle class that encounters prejudice in its competition with whites for a few professional opportunities and a permanent, workless 'underclass' for whom racism past or present is secondary to the institutionalised effects of multiple economic disadvantage. You don't have to buy into Wilson's patriarchal solutions to recognise the kernel of wisdom in his diagnosis of black America's ills.

The residual narcissism of the black bourgeoisie is still with us, though since Wright's day, that class has gradually become parasitic upon the rich culture of the black poor. (The Hip Hop culture that has recently taken the world by storm is but the latest expression of the perverse cultural logic in which the most marginal group is also the most creative.) The South Africanisation of cities like East St Louis and Detroit is the best-known example of what has happened now that this middle class has fled from the physical space it once shared with the black poor. It resolves its unwelcome position of dependency on them and on their definition of racial authenticity by projecting a neo-nationalist ideology that mystifies the volatile relationship between the two groups. The active opposition between them is thus dissolved in a dewy-eyed representation of kin, blood and communal harmony in which presenting race as family is the key to making the conflict between races and ethnic groups

appear to be a natural, spontaneous and inevitable feature of social life.

The conflict between racial or ethnic groups becomes part of an unchangeable human nature too. Spike sums up the consequences like this: "Any race is going to say that their own race is a priority". It is the fundamental symbol of the family which works to ensure that the concept of race is retained when the dimensions of the catastrophe in which it is embedded point to its overcoming.

Uplifting the race

Whereas the pathological family forms produced by racism are ruled by women, the healthy black family must be headed by a patriarch. The material horrors of life in America's urban black communities are far too readily translated into a panic about the vulnerability of young black men to racism, poverty, crack cocaine, Aids and the culturally sanctioned compulsion to slaughter each other. It bears repetition that women carry the can for these cosy representations of the black family.

The politics of race played out as the politics of family is the background against which Spike Lee's work should be interpreted. His public projection of his own family is just the start: Dad, Joie, David and Spike himself are all hard at work uplifting the race. The very tentative ventures into exploring gender roles in the first two films gradually gave way to a lyrical mode that might be called 'Brownstone Pastorale'. This idealised and relentlessly sentimental conception of stable, symmetrical black family life co-exists with its antithesis in *Do the Right Thing*. It forms an ugly bridge between the end of *Mo' Better Blues* and the beginning of *Jungle Fever*.

Of course cultural play and racial affirmation are important. They can, for example, enhance black people's capacity to act as a community capable of defending itself. But aside from this, and the related question of morale, it is time to ask whether there is anything useful in what Spike's movies offer us. "Get your own pizzeria" is hardly a radical rallying cry. We may also require a more effective strategy for dealing with crack cocaine than the notion that junkies are better off dead.

Spike looks at the complex of fear and desire that has engulfed 'race mixing' since the dawn of America and, having explored the arbitrariness and absurdity of racial classifications, concludes with the absolutely conservative message that we should cleave to those who share our own phenotypes if the integrity of our cultures is to be preserved. Like Dap at the end of *School Daze*, Flipper is only able to bellow his uncomprehending dissent from a world which has left him and his creator politically inert. The chaste, tender gesture towards the 'crack ho' at the end of *Jungle Fever* cuts against the grain of everything that preceded it. Spike is revealed, rather like Brecht who has influenced him so much, to be a lover of his chosen artistic medium whose loudly declared political commitments only end up trivialising the political reality at stake in his work and thereby diminishing its constructive political effect.

State of grace

"This picture, *this* picture – I don't give a fuck what anybody says. If you don't have time to see it, don't. If you don't like it, don't. If it doesn't give you an answer, fuck you. I didn't make it for you anyway".

John Cassavetes, after shooting his Las Vegas, eight summers ago. It is 110 in the shade and he is filming a couple of scenes of his last film, *Love Streams*. He has begun to suspect, and will soon know, that he is dying. One day at dailies he says to no one in particular, "This is a sweet film. If I die, this is a sweet last film". For the moment, he chooses to take the possibility of death as just another part of the atmosphere, significant but not central, in the creation of his new work. "I don't direct a film", he is fond of saying. "I set up an atmosphere and the *atmosphere* directs the film".

Night and day

John's "atmosphere" takes place night and day, without let-up, whether the cameras are rolling or not, and now it's taking place at a joint called The Tower of Pizza on the south end of the Vegas Strip. Several of us are drinking wine and being loud, especially Cassavetes and his cousin, the film's art director and John's staunch ally, Phedon Papamichael.

They are driving the waitress crazy. Phedon wants absolutely no garlic. Cassavetes wants to have a discussion with the cook. Phedon is insisting that even a place called The Tower of Pizza shouldn't mind preparing special, slightly exotic dishes that are not on the menu. The waitress is barely restraining herself from throwing something not very exotic all over us.

Cassavetes eggs her on because he likes her toughness. I've become used to this way of his, how he'll see a quality he likes in a stranger, and he'll goad and push until he gets a good taste of it. If the food starts to fly tonight, he won't care. He likes flying food.

A young actor in our party is explaining to John why she can't stand his character in the film: "He's a creep with his kid". John comes back at her with something he loves to say and says often, that he understands everybody in the movie but his own character. Then John's eyes get brighter: he doesn't want to understand his own character; he doesn't want to understand himself either; on or off the screen, what people call 'understanding' is over-rated. "I love motion, change, and I hate answers – because they stop change".

"You're a phoney sonofabitch", Phedon says, matter-of-factly.

"I'm phoney?", John explodes. Phedon has done his part, given John a hook for another riff, and now he sits back and watches the show, just like the rest of us. "I feel sorry for you", John says with glee, "because you're phoney, because you think you know what's right, what's good. I don't know and I don't wanna know".

"You put your life into the movie",

In love with fury and laughter, film-maker and actor John Cassavetes is remembered by screenwriter Michael Ventura on the set of 'Love Streams', Cassavetes' last film

Phedon tells him, "and then you say that you don't".

"What?"

"You know. Don't tell me like you don't know".

A beat of silence – something rare in their exchanges. Then John says, "I put everything into the movie. What I know and what I don't know. And that's as far from phoney as Kelsey's you-know-what". (Nobody ever knew what "Kelsey's you-know-what" was.)

Which makes me think of another John-and-Phedon exchange a couple of months earlier during pre-production, when an argument about the colour of upholstery digressed into a discussion of love (talks with John often did). "That was the biggest discovery I ever made", John said at the time, "that love stops. Just like a clock. Or anything. Then you wind it and it goes again. Because if it stops forever, then you die".

"Love", Phedon started to say, but John interrupted with: "I know what love is".

"You don't", Phedon said quietly.

"You know I know", John said just as quietly.

"And, if you know?"

"Love – is the ability of not knowing".

I was in the institution at the time. The institution of marriage, I mean. Testing for myself some quaint and/or self-destructive ideas about love. I heard "Love is the ability of not knowing" as Cassavetes' way of saying, "Love is having faith". John had a dismissive shrug he reserved for ideas and people not worthy of his attack, and I can see now how he would have shrugged off the word 'faith'. His films begin at the moment when a person has been forced beyond such words – the moment, as he put it, "when you can't find your way home". ("That's when I consider it's worth

it to make a film", he added.)

What if, as he always insisted, there are no answers? What if there's just the unknown within you, between you, behind you, and in front of you? And what if that unknown is impenetrable by love? What, then, can your bond with another human being consist of? When that bond is tested (for it will be), what will be tested?

In Cassavetes' films, what is tested is what he called, in his peculiar grammar, "the ability of not knowing". How much can you allow yourself to feel, or share, or be, when you'll never know? When there can be no security, since anything that can serve as security, any promise of insurance, can be taken from you in an instant? When there is nothing but what you feel, what you sense the other person feels, and the unknown? What if this is the way it is, beyond all philosophies, arts, therapies – all those palliative constructs? Welcome to the laughter of John Cassavetes.

That high, wheezy, witchy laugh that he let loose on film only three times: in short bursts during *Husbands*; in a graveyard with Peter Falk during *Mikey and Nicky*; and at full blast in the last moments of his last performance, *Love Streams*. I think about that sometimes, about the last things John Cassavetes did on film. He laughed that laugh, then he said goodbye to Gena, and then he waved goodbye to the camera.

The last drink

Las Vegas, the summer of 1983, later that night, in John's room. The walls are coloured puke green. "A perfect room", he says, "a room where lots of people have lost. Lost things important to them, not just money".

There are a few of us, we're quiet, it's the end of the night, the last drink. I'm thinking that it's incredible that his films, while so merciless, so furious, aren't depressing. Fury and laughter were John's ways, not depression. Did he owe that to his ability of not knowing? As the summer goes on it'll be clearer that he's dying, but we won't speak of it. Much later, a few months before his death, he'll say to me, "Is life about horror – or is it about those few moments we have?"

As always, he won't pretend that the question has an answer. But now, in this terrible room which he really does relish, he's thinking about his art and he says, more to himself than to any of us: "What people like is different from what they want. You have to give them what they want, not what they like. They see insincerity and they hate it – but they don't say what they really feel. Why do people throw away all their mentality, all of what they really feel, in lieu of a promise – fake, made by the society – of how everybody's supposed to live?"

Goodnight, John.



John Cassavetes: a man who never wanted to understand himself

NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

American Rhapsodies

Michael Chanan

A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann

Steven C. Smith, University of California Press, \$29.95, 415pp

Probably the most difficult collaboration in the process of making a film is that between the director and the composer. Few directors are musically literate; they must therefore rely heavily on the composer's judgment as to what is needed and where. And the results are likely to be something of a gamble. Ask the photographer for a wide-angle lens or low-key lighting and you know what the outcome is likely to be. Suggestions for musical effects, however, tend to be more impressionistic – "Let's have something tender/menacing/nostalgic here", for example – and couched in terms which could describe any style of music.

The difficulties are exacerbated because often the composer is brought in at a late stage of post-production and has to deliver in double-quick time. Under these conditions, a director unhappy with the composer's efforts can do little more than discard some of what has been written in favour of music appropriated from elsewhere. Stanley Kubrick had two composers working on scores for *2001: A Space Odyssey*, but ended up using the temporary track he prepared while editing.

Of course, the director can show the composer a rough cut with examples of the kind of music he or she is thinking of laid in. But when Brian De Palma, who had approached Bernard Herrmann to write the music for *Sisters*, did so with Herrmann's music from *Marnie*, Herrmann stopped the projection: "Turn it off! I don't want to hear 'Marnie' when I'm looking at your movie. How can I think of anything new with that playing?"

Clearly, the problems are reduced if a composer is already identified with a certain style. This explains the formulaic nature of most Hollywood film music, since under such pressures composers too are inclined to play safe. It also explains why Hollywood has seldom engaged composers with independent reputations, since they are usually too idiosyncratic. Any suggestion that this is because film music is a specialised craft is belied by the number of established European composers who have written first-rate film scores. In Hollywood, it is more likely that an otherwise run-of-the-mill composer can make a strong impression by cultivating a limited number of devices particularly suited to the medium.

Steven C. Smith's biography of Bernard

Herrmann offers a portrait of just such a person – on one level very good at his job, but seemingly incapable of creative dialogue with the directors he worked for. A leading figure in the second generation of Hollywood composers, Herrmann first went West with Orson Welles in 1940 to write the music for *Citizen Kane*. He quickly became celebrated for a number of significant innovations, in particular an original approach to instrumentation.

The leading composers of the first generation, Max Steiner and Erich Korngold, were both Viennese expatriates, practitioners of a late-Romantic symphonic style which owed a great deal to Wagner, Richard Strauss and Puccini. Herrmann, by contrast, believed that since a film score was written for a single performance, there was no logic in sticking to the standard symphony orchestra. He scored the opening sequence of *Citizen Kane*, for example, for twelve flutes (including four alto and four bass), contrabass clarinets, tubas, trombones, low percussion and vibraphone.

This ear for instrumental texture made him an excellent choice for the science fiction film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), which he scored for electric violin and bass and theremins – an electronic instrument invented in 1924. He also experimented with recording techniques like the superimposition of tracks or play-



Tippi Hedren in 'The Birds' – one of Herrmann's, and Hollywood's, most innovative soundtracks

Instrumental texture: Michael Rennie in 'The Day the Earth Stood Still'



ing tracks backwards, culminating in his soundtrack for Hitchcock's *The Birds* (written in collaboration with avant-garde composer Remi Gassman), which at the director's suggestion eschewed conventional music for elaborately 'orchestrated' electronic bird noises.

The details of these experiments are documented by Smith in a laconic way. The book is a biography rather than a musical study, and the stories revealing Herrmann to have been a highly opinionated and unpleasant character, though occasionally amusing, become tedious. Much more engaging are the glimpses of New York musical life in the 30s – when Herrmann belonged to the Young Composers Group sponsored by Aaron Copland – and the account of his early radio work with Orson Welles.

Unfortunately, the level of musical erudition (and of film criticism) is barely adequate, and Smith provides no more than passing illumination of the practices and problems of creating film music. The music of each of the films Herrmann scored is described in a few paragraphs, and the reader learns little of the details of his craft. A music editor is quoted as saying that Herrmann "was our idol because of the way he composed. He had a vertical form of four-bar phrases that was so easy to cut". Elmer Bernstein comments on Herrmann's use of ostinato – a short repeated musical figure frequently found in accompaniments in classical music. But the reason this device is so useful for the film composer – because accompaniment without any melody provides soundtrack filler which does not draw attention to itself – is barely hinted at. Sometimes the impression is given that the composer's principal job is to make up for the director's failure to maintain dramatic tension.

Smith tends to take Herrmann's own observations about the function of film music at face value. Sadly, these are no more than (re)statements of Hollywood orthodoxy: "Music for film should be no more noticed than the camerawork... Music is a kind of binding veneer that holds a film together". Assertions like these are half-truths – and they tell the wrong half.

At one point, Smith quotes a letter which Herrmann wrote to the *New York Times* in reply to devastating comments on the poverty of film music made by the conductor Erich Leinsdorf. When Leinsdorf laments the fact that good modern composers avoid working for the screen, Herrmann replies, "Might it not be, simply, that these composers, though their talents are of sterling quality, lack the dramatic flair?" Nowhere does Smith indicate that he understands the unintended irony: that what made Herrmann such an effective creator of film scores was his own limited talents as a composer.

It isn't just that Smith seems entirely unacquainted with the small amount of existing critical literature on film music, like Adorno and Eisler's *Composing for the Films*, or Joseph Horowitz's *Understanding Toscanini*, which engages with a host of questions about music within modern cul-



Jeanne Moreau and Stanley Baker in 'Eve': this downbeat story of obsessive love was Losey's first encounter with European modernism

ture industries. Smith's book begs too many questions, including that of the adequacy of this type of biographical study to add anything except anecdote to our understanding of its subject.

Boom!

David Caute

Joseph Losey

Edith De Rham, André Deutsch, £17.99, 378pp

Joseph Losey's work as a theatre and film director passed through four obvious phases: the aestheticism and culture hunger of his college days; the sharp left turn into agitprop from 1935 to 1945; the studio-formula-plus-message films from *The Boy with Green Hair* to *The Damned*; and, finally, the embrace of European modernism beginning with *Eve* (Eva) and finding its most brilliant expression in three films written by Harold Pinter.

Edith De Rham might not agree with this layout; many critics have proposed alternative Losey scaffolding. But De Rham has no questions to pose, let alone answers to give, beyond the familiar theme that Losey was a mid-Western puritan. Lacking

a critical vocabulary, she describes his films in terms of their storylines, without conveying the visual experience of seeing them. Doggedly she pursues the life and the work, one card index after another, with little sense of shape or priority. Relying on interview chatter, particularly from women bearing Losey wounds, she yet misses out his great Finnish lady love and some splendid infidelities.

She would rather waste a page on the ramblings of a producer who did *not* make *The Go-Between* than discuss the immense technical problems that Losey and Pinter encountered when adapting L. P. Hartley's novel. Pinter's scripts, and Losey's fascinating annotations, escape her narrative, just as Pinter's published screenplays and a crucial biography of Losey's first wife escape her Toytown bibliography.

This is an unauthorised biography, boycotted by Losey's widow and executrix who, along with Pinter, Losey's sister and his son Gavrik, withheld collaboration. De Rham was also denied access to Losey's private papers and diaries. Black holes abound. Author and publishers alike would have honoured themselves by signalling these handicaps, and by the inclusion of sources. Time and again witnesses "say", "recall", "comment" – but when,

where, to whom? De Rham has certainly done her interviews, but long-since published testimony is often made to sound as if it were whispered in her ear.

But here let me come clean. After three years working on Losey's authorised biography, I have a vested interest in finding fault with De Rham's book, and am no doubt unhealthily alert to errors of fact and chronology. These are so numerous as to cause vertigo. Losey's third wife's name is misspelled, his fourth wife, Patricia Tolusso, is "Taluso" throughout, his first wife dies in Los Angeles rather than New York, his son Joshua is born in New York rather than London, Losey walks Gavrik to school in London, despite the boy having spent his school years in America. The family chronology is consistently haywire.

David Mercer is said to have worked on *Voss* with Losey before *A Doll's House*; Losey's fiasco with Graham Greene is set in 1983 rather than 1980; Losey is awarded his Chevalier in France in 1970 rather than 1968; he is said to be sixty-two rather than fifty-eight in 1967; and so on. Any error in the great source book, Michel Ciment's *Conversations With Losey*, is faithfully reproduced, whether it be Losey's own faulty recall or mistakes in the filmography. De Rham's pages are littered with internal ►

◀ contradictions which any good editor without prior knowledge of Losey should have spotted.

De Rham maintains that in Robin Maugham's original novella, *The Servant*, the young seducer was male, a bogus nephew. Nonsense. James Hadley Chase's novel, *Eve*, is said to be about the relationship between a prostitute and a detective. Nonsense. *The Servant* is said to have been shot in a house in Royal Avenue – in fact the interiors were done in the studio. Much of her information about the frustrated Pinter-Losey Proust project is plain wrong. The cabaret scene in *Mr Klein*, one learns, was filmed at the "famous bistro", La Coupole. It wasn't and Cabourg isn't a village on the coast of Brittany. *Time Without Pity* got "splendid reviews" but none are cited, which isn't surprising, since the film was cruelly ignored. Conversely, "most critics" in America "did not" review *Boom!* – but they did, and how!

The crisis of Losey's HUAC subpoena and exile is garbled. His problems concerning passport and work permit are hashed: "Whenever his passport expired he had to leave the country" is an absurd reversal of the obvious truth. The secret non-Communist oaths that Losey signed are not known about. The British fiscal rules that precipitated his "tax exile" to France in 1975 are not understood.

The book, announces the preface, is intended "to celebrate the long and productive life of a great film director". This is occasionally repeated, like Mark Antony's "honourable men", through a steady drizzle of acid rain. De Rham's previous works are given as *The Love Fraud* (1960) and *How Could She Do That?* (1970). I suspect that she set out to nail Losey for his love frauds, bottles, latterday obesity, fancy cravats and "low sperm count", and then discovered some forty unwelcome hurdles in the shape of his oeuvre.

Not-so-tough guys

Peter Matthews

In a Lonely Street:

Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity

Frank Krutnik, Routledge, £10.99, 268pp

The pleasures offered by 40s film noir endure, not least for theorists fascinated by its variegated texture of psychopathology and sexual perversity. The tarnished look and cynical spirit of classic noir are still compelling alongside the high gloss of most studio-era productions. But Frank Krutnik, in his densely argued, ingenious study, warns against too rapid a seduction. The powerful mystique of film noir, he complains, can sap our energy for strenuous historical research, resulting in the swooning impressionism that typifies much writing on the subject. The reader may object to this less fiercely than the author; but in film theory pleasure is often there to be debunked.

Against the enthusiasts who acclaim its subversive qualities, Krutnik insists on



Post-war gender crisis: Robert Mitchum as the masochistic hero of Jacques Tourneur's 'Out of the Past'

the standardised, industrial basis of noir. The illicit desires it stirs are made relatively innocuous by conventional Hollywood stylisation in a play of conformity and calculated risk. Krutnik meticulously pinpoints the generic variations on the stock 'hard-boiled' themes. He discriminates usefully between, for example, the 'outlaw couple' film, the 'rogue cop' thriller and the 'police procedural' thriller which, with its impersonal, semi-documentary look, marks a swing back to law and order at the end of the cycle.

But there is no such thing as pure film noir, and Krutnik prefers to speak of a loose 'phenomenon' instead of a genre. He manages none the less to identify a group of films showing some unity in their attention to unstable, impaired states of masculinity. The paradox of the so-called 'tough' thriller is how untough its protagonists frequently are. The noir hero, manipulated by feminine treachery, persecuted by fate or criminal conspiracy, seems a poor specimen beside the efficient, self-contained private dick of more classical male romance. Unaccountably, the spectacle of this degraded manhood is presented as alluring, almost glamorous.

Krutnik asks why films like *The Killers* (1946) and *Out of the Past* (1947) exult in scenarios of masculine humiliation. The solution, predictably enough, can be found in Freudian theory: under cover of its surface toughness, film noir indulges a fantasy of flight from 'phallic' responsibility. This he ascribes to a post-war gender crisis which allowed deviant forms of masculinity to be entertained if suitably disguised (hence the popularity in noir of the returning veteran figure). Film noir becomes something like a 'male weepie', the battle-fatigued viewer licking his wounds discreetly along with the masochist on the screen.

Krutnik's portrait of the noir hero as a schlemiel is certainly provocative. The passive men he describes may, however, have as much to do with current theoretical preoccupations as with the Second World War. Krutnik's interest in history is nominal, hardly more than a pretext for the nimble manoeuvres of his argument. What really animates his book, one suspects, is the desire of a male film critic to seize some of the insights offered by feminist theories of spectatorship. The 'real man' with his killer gaze of 70s film

studies is traded in for a reconstructed 90s model, a 'new man' in 40s drag.

But Krutnik never says whether his tough-sensitive types represent a political advance. Nor does theoretical etiquette allow him to admit to any preferences among the films. It is dismaying that pleasure should remain an academic issue. As elegantly as Krutnik states his case, one would willingly sacrifice a little rigour for some vulgar cinephiliac passion.

Warring fictions

Alf Louvre

The Vietnam War and American Culture

John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg (eds),

Columbia University Press, \$40.50, 275pp

While half the world watched the latest Rambo movie and the other half were queuing for their MacChickenburgers, Bush's America won the Cold War and triumphed in the Gulf. With the alacrity characteristic of Hollywood, they're making the film, *Heroes of the Storm*, while the corpse is warm: art imitating death.

Fittingly, our editors start with the reminder that "American political power in the twentieth century... has depended upon the ability of the United States to represent itself both to its own citizens and other peoples of the world". With essays on 'History', 'Mass Media' and 'Popular Media', this book considers how America represented itself in a less triumphal phase, after the defeat in Vietnam.

Naom Chomsky and Stephen Vlastos challenge right-wing (re)visions of America's 'crusade' in Vietnam. They demonstrate the hypocrisy of the new history's rhetoric and accuse many of the academic intelligentsia of complicity. Chomsky cites popular resistance to this indoctrination, offers a counter-narrative (Vietnam as another cynical American invasion) and keeps faith with the power of personal witness: "The elementary truths about these terrible years survive in the memories of those who opposed the US war".

How memory and personal experience are themselves mediated by aesthetic and ideological conventions is the concern of other contributors. These literary-cum-cultural critics, writing in the wake of deconstruction, are less hopeful. Rick Berg's essay describes how one young heroine "knows nothing of Nam other than the multitude of representations that signify our loss... Nothing is authentic". Not even – as John Carlos Rowe's essay on documentary styles argues – the eyewitness account. In fact, such works "remind us of how tempting it is to substitute personal experience for historical and political knowledge, especially in an American culture that has tended to mythologise the special value of direct experience".

Challenging readings of movies like *The Deerhunter*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Coming Home* (and of major TV documentaries, novels, propaganda films and various public memorials)

Before Rambo: Robert De Niro in 'The Deerhunter'



establish the resourcefulness of dominant ideologies, their immense recuperative capacities. Real experience of atrocity and genocide is transmuted via the rhetorics of realism, melodrama and docudrama into 'universal' statements about individual redemption or the love that persists in America's homes. Then there was Rambo...

Rowe claims that his work (and, presumably, the book) comes at a time when "deconstruction becomes cultural criticism", less a matter of ironic, metaphysical commentary than an engaged and reforming attitude to "the politics of interpretation". But old habits die hard. Despite itself, the book sometimes privileges sophisticated readings whose relationship to the popular reception and use of the same texts remains unexamined. A gap threatens to open between the (apparently) duped Hollywood punters "craving ... the illusion of realism" (no Chomskian popular resistance here) and the critics (using a magisterial 'we') who see through it. Ideology is at once monolithic, and somewhere else.

Surprisingly, for a contribution to a series titled *The Social Foundations of Aesthetic Form*, there is little sustained work in this book on the genres and institutions that produce these texts (David James' essay on American music excepted). More needs to be said, too, about why more non-literary texts (journalism, comics, cartoons) aren't featured and, especially, what the difference is between 'mass' and 'popular' media. Finally, the failure to offer any extended account of major films after 1984 is disappointing.

Like other recent collections attempting to cover this immense field, the book is flawed. But it contains much that is valuable, especially when writers such as Carol Ann Mithers and Susan Jeffords reach beyond the established, masculine corpus to the doubly repressed: women's experience of war. When time (and Schwarzkopf, and Hollywood) marches on, we need all the help we can get.

Play it again

Jonathan Rosenbaum

The Cult Film Experience: Beyond All Reason

J. P. Telotte (ed), University of Texas Press, \$36, 218pp

"It will be a sad day when a too smart audience will read *Casablanca* as conceived by Michael Curtiz after having read Calvino and Barthes", Umberto Eco wrote in 1984. "But that day will come". J. P. Telotte's collection reminds us that Eco's sad day is already well behind us – though it turns out to be Eco himself rather than Calvino or Barthes who provides the principal theoretical back-up.

Serious analysis of film cults can be traced back to a 1932 essay by Harry Alan Potamkin, but you won't find Potamkin's name in Telotte's index. Indeed, apart from some cursory acknowledgments, the book fosters the impression that the arrival of film cults coincided with the

burgeoning of film studies in the early 70s. This suggests that academic film study is itself an unacknowledged form of cult activity, predicated on repeated viewings by a fetishistically inclined minority audience which reappropriates the film in question for its own specialised purposes.

One of these purposes is institutional, which accounts for the academics' frequent recourse to the self-validating and ahistorical term 'classical' to dignify both mainstream movie-making and established film theory. Telotte, with a few hums and haws, refers to *Casablanca*, *Beat the Devil* and Judy Garland vehicles as 'classical cult films'. Unlike the 'midnight movies' that constitute the book's other major category, these are the mainstream films that were made and embraced (if not always cultishly) before 'classical' film studies got underway.

There's an interesting contradiction in the supposed objectivity of the analyst confronting the supposed subjectivity of the cultist. Some of the best pieces here reveal a fascination with certain movies that goes beyond the decorum of classroom detachment. James Card's informative 'Confessions of a *Casablanca* Cultist: An Enthusiast Meets the Myth and Its Flaws' addresses this contradiction head on, while Gregory A. Waller's detailed market study of midnight movie exhibition between 1980 and 1985 in Lexington, Kentucky, where he lives and works, profits from a related proximity.

The sharp, original readings of midnight movies by Gaylyn Studlar and David Lavery betray signs of personal investment that enhance their ideological critiques, and other pieces on *Casablanca* by Telotte and Larry Vonalt – both of whom beg to differ with Eco, finding forms of coherence that his analysis ignores – can be interpreted indirectly as defences waged on behalf of the film's partisans.

Definitions of what constitutes a cult film vary widely. Timothy Corrigan nominates both *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, while Barry K. Grant makes room for *La Cage aux folles* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. All the writers seem fascinated by the extent to which audiences can create their own canons and meanings – 'beyond all reason', and in seeming defiance of all the force-feeding the industry tries to impose.

Beyond reason: Michel Galabru and Michel Serrault in cult film 'La Cage aux folles'



Shorts

Selected Takes:

Film Editors on Editing

Vincent LoBrutto, Praeger, £13.95, 248pp
● Interviews with twenty-one US film editors, including Dede Allen (*Reds*), Tom Rolf (*Jacob's Ladder*), Lou Lombardo (*The Wild Bunch*), Tina Hirsch (*The Driver*) and Woody Allen's editor Susan E. Morse. They discuss their relationships with directors, technical procedures, the structure and development of scenes and the films they have worked on, throwing light on perhaps the most crucial and least understood aspect of the film-making process.

The Charm of Evil:

The Life and Films of Terence Fisher

Wheeler Winston Dixon, Scarecrow Press, \$59.50, 574pp

● A critical assessment of Fisher's life and work, including a filmography with extensive credits, and an introduction by John Carpenter about the influence of Fisher's horror output on his own work. Amazingly, this extensive study is the first book to have appeared in English devoted solely to Terence Fisher's films.

Screenplays of the

African American Experience

Phyllis Rauch Klotman (ed), Indiana University Press, £10.50, 265pp

● A collection of six screenplays from the US black independent sector, each preceded by an introduction and bio-filmography of the film-maker in question. The selection includes *Killer of Sheep* (Charles Burnett), *Losing Ground* (Kathleen Collins), *Illusions* (Julie Dash) and *Sidewalk Stories* (Charles Lane).

The Films of Nicholas Ray:

The Poet of Nightfall

Geoff Andrew, Letts, £9.95, 221pp

● Film-by-film analysis of Ray's chequered career providing synopses and credits for the movies, and including an entry on the rarely seen television film *High Green Wall*. Andrew's detailed, densely written commentaries combine passionate admiration with critical assessment. A classic auteur study which only occasionally shows signs of strain, as in the struggle to integrate *A Woman's Secret* into the authorial canon.

Backstory 2:

Interviews with Screenwriters of the 1940s and 1950s

Pat McGilligan, University of California Press, \$29.95, 417pp

● A follow-up to McGilligan's *Backstory* (1986), covering the crucial twenty years from 1939 to 1959 in which Hollywood was dramatically transformed and the studio contract writer became an endangered species. Interviewees include Philip Yordan, Ben Maddow and Leigh Brackett, admired by Howard Hawks for her ability to write like a man.

London's West End Cinemas

Allen Eyles and Keith Skone, Keytone Publications, £9.95, 120pp

● A history of another endangered species, ranging from 1896 to the present day, which includes maps and black and white photographs displaying fascinating details of cinema architecture. The changing face of the Empire Leicester Square is particularly riveting.

Reviews

Blonde Fist

Certificate
15
Distributor
Blue Dolphin
Production Company
Blue Dolphin
In association with
Film Four
International
Producers
Christopher Figg
Joseph D'Morais
Associate Producer
Quenton D. Annis
Production
Co-ordinators
Thelma Hutchinson
NY:
Janice Zenner
Production Manager
Alexandra Reed
Location Managers
Mark Stevenson
NY:
Sandy Nelson
Extras Casting
Beth George
Assistant Directors
Mike Gowans
Glenys Davies
James Ridpath
Kenny Strickland
NY:
Priscilla Guastavino
Screenplay
Frank Clarke
Director of Photography
Bruce McGowan
In colour
Camera Operator
Peter Thornton
Editor
Brian Peachey
Production Designer
Colin Pocock
Art Director
Bill Crutcher
Music
Alan Gill
Music Extracts
"Waltz of the Flowers"
by Pyotr Tchaikovsky,
performed by James
Baring
Music Performed by
Alan Gill
Additional:
James Baring
Additional Music
Arrangements
James Baring

Songs
"Love Eviction",
"Like I've Never Been
Gone" performed by
Billy Fury; "Last Train
for Transcentral",
"Live from the Lost
Continent"
by J. Cauty,
W. Drummond,
L. McFarland, R. Lyte;
"The Iron Horse",
"1989 Pure Original"
by J. Cauty,
W. Drummond;
"Goodnight Irene"
by Lomax, Ledbetter,
performed by The
Well Oiled Sisters
Costume Design
Gill Horne
Make-up Artist
Beverley Pond Jones
Title Design
Jamie Reid
Titles
Computer Film
Company
Sound Editors
Sarah Vickers
Dialogue:
Ross Adams
Foley Editor
Ian Neale
Sound Recordists
Ed Leatham
NY:
Christopher Logan
Sound Re-recorder
Ernest Marsh
Dolby stereo
Fight Arranger
Tom Lucy

Cast
Margi Clarke
Ronnie O'Dowd
Carroll Baker
Lovelie Summers
Ken Hutchinson
John O'Dowd
Sharon Power
Mary
Angela Clarke
Brenda Doyle
Lewis Bester
Young Tony
Gary Mavers
Tony Bone
Jeff Weatherford
Dan
Graham Winton
Bart
Jane Porter
Big Alice
Genevieve Walsh
Miss Marshall
Lyn Kelly
Tony's Girlfriend
David Crean
Boxing MC
Julie Aldred
Helen
Susan Atkins
Crazy Sue
Julie Graham
Sylvie
Francis Husband
Patsy
Steven Graham
Young Boy
Tina Malone
Mrs Crane
Jake Abrahams
Eric Crane
Jeanette Mallon
Barbara Crane
Alan Bird
Magistrate
Megan McArton
Hotel Receptionist
Margo Van Der Bergh
Mrs Skudalapski
Mandy Walsh
Mrs Maines
Kathline Wells
Mrs Walker
John McMenagh
Young John O'Dowd
Eileen Clarke
Anne Jane O'Dowd
Angela Walsh
Miss Cruikshank

9,219 feet
102 minutes

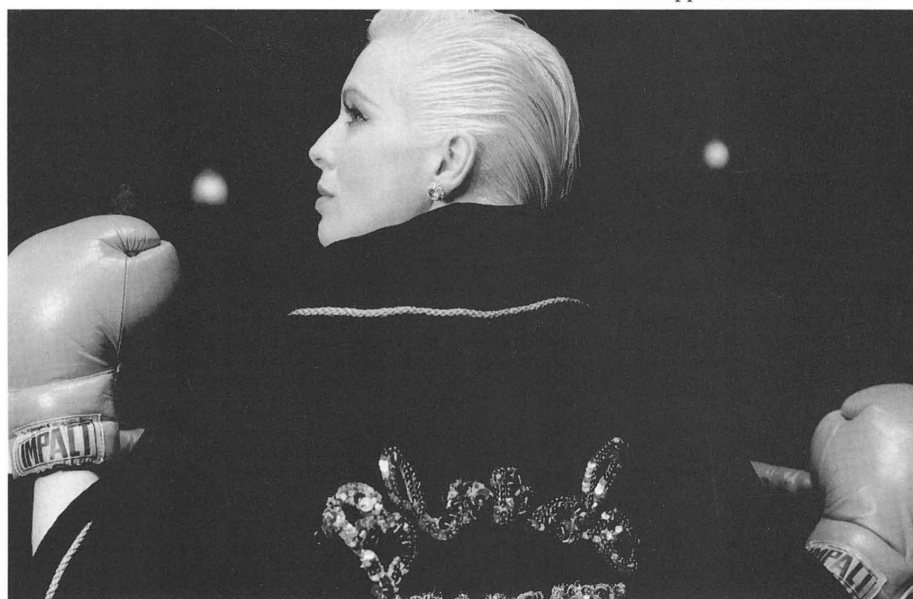
United Kingdom 1991
Director: Frank Clarke

● Anne Jane O'Dowd goes into labour while shopping in Kirkby market and gives birth to her daughter Ronnie as her husband John fights bare-knuckled for money. On his arrival home and before realising she is a girl, John takes up the baby and announces a future world boxing champion. As a young woman with a child, however, Ronnie proves good with her fists: after knocking out the local bully, she goes out on the town with her best friend Mary.

Learning that Tony Bone, her ex-boyfriend and the father of her child, has just been released from prison, she seeks him out, and finds him at a night-club with another woman. Ronnie returns home depressed after a row outside the dance hall, only to wake in the night to find Tony beside her bed. They make love but in the morning her hopes of renewing the relationship are dashed when he leaves to return to his girlfriend.

Visiting the welfare office, Ronnie finds that Tony's girlfriend is the officer in charge of her case. Ronnie's claim is 'lost' and they row about Tony. Ronnie assaults the girl outside the office, and is sent to prison while her son is taken into care. In prison Ronnie uses her boxing skills to defend her cellmate Brenda against the prison bully Big Alice, whom she knocks out. Anxious to be with her son, Ronnie escapes from prison with Brenda.

Rescuing her son, she leaves for New York to find her father, who she believes is a big boxing promoter. A middle-aged chambermaid and ex-showgirl, Lovelle, takes her to him, a broken-down alcoholic making a living as a dishwasher. Ronnie vows to take him back to Liverpool, and against her father's wishes but with Lovelle's support enters a women's



A romantic thing: Margi Clarke

Reviews, synopses
and full credits for
all the month's new
films and new
British TV films

prize boxing match to raise the fare. She wins when her father arrives to spur her on. Ronnie, her son and father return to Liverpool on the QE2 to start their lives afresh.

● Frank Clarke's directorial début, featuring his sisters Margi and Angela Clarke, reveals very little of the charm, humour and intelligence of his script for *Letter to Brezhnev*. This is a sentimental and rather patronising fairy-tale of working-class life, seemingly based on the idea that this class is fundamentally about brawling. *Blonde Fist* also implies that the working-class spirit is essentially sustained by its women (Ronnie, her mother, Brenda, Lovelle in an American version, and even Tony's bureaucratic girlfriend), a strain of 'heroic women' which has resurfaced in recent years in quite different kinds of British film.

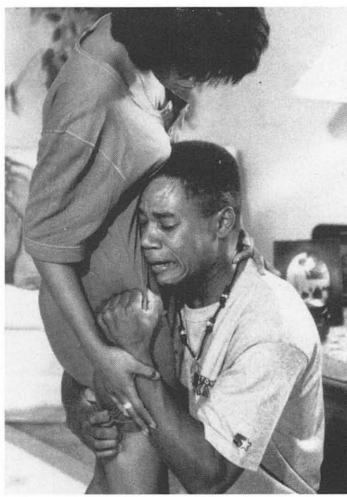
But *Blonde Fist* attempts to treat its subject in a comic vein (unconvincingly comparing itself with the Ealing comedies). The despair, fear and isolation of the unemployed working-class single mother is never confronted, the conditions of her existence resolved by literally bloody competitiveness in the boxing ring. Boxing as the traditional male mode of escape from poverty, with its controversial claims to being a safe sport, are also ignored (Clarke asserts that "boxing is a romantic thing for women. They see it as an art form, not violence"). Boxing in film, classically in Hollywood, has usually been a vehicle for exploring personal tragedy, poverty and social corruption. That the sport which produced *Raging Bull* is so naively used here simply highlights the dreadful state of maintrickle cinema in this country.

In fact, the subject is tastelessly trivialised as a desperate fantasy in Thatcherite vein of fighting 'tooth and claw', using one's 'initiative' and most debased talents (inflicting pain on others) to escape social deprivation. Class cohesion and community values are irretrievably lost (Tony is a criminal and deserts his child, as does Ronnie's father; Ronnie's friends are good-time girls and prisoners). Only the family is invested with any value, that of a mindless amoral loyalty.

Interestingly, the one conventional mainstay of value is dead, Ronnie's mother. And without her, we feel the moral world is disordered beyond rescue (compare the mothers in *The Krays* and *Distant Voices Still Lives*). Instead of using the Ealing comedies as a reference point, Clarke would have been better served by the Depression films of Frank Capra.

Michael O'Pray

Boyz N the Hood



Leaderless: Nia Long, Cuba Gooding Jr

Certificate
15

Distributor
Columbia Tri-Star
Production Company
Columbia

Producer
Steve Nicolaides
Production Associate
Kendrick J. Wallace
Production Co-ordinator
Linda Allan-Folsom
Unit Production Manager
Steve Nicolaides

Location Manager
Ernest Kojo Lewis
Casting
Jaki Brown

Assistant Directors
Don Wilkerson
Eric Jones

Screenplay
John Singleton
Director of Photography
Charles Mills

Colour
DeLuxe
Prints by Technicolor

Camera Operator
Tony Gaudio
Editor
Bruce Cannon

Art Director
Bruce Bellamy
Set Decorator
Kathryn Peters

Special Effects
Special Effects Unlimited
Music
Stanley Clarke

Music Supervisor
Raoul Roach
Music Editor
Jamie Gelb

Songs
"Jam on It" by M. B. Cenac, performed by Newcleus;

"Sunshower" by Stony Browder Jnr, August Darnell, performed by Dr Buzzard's Original Savannah Band; "More Bounce to the Ounce"

by Roger Troutman, performed by Zapp; "Sucker M.C.'s" by L. Smith, J. Simmons, D. McDaniels, performed by Run-D.M.C.; "Ooh Child" by Stan Vincent, performed by The Five Stairsteps;

"Work It Out" by Jazzy Jeff, Monie Love, performed by Monie Love; "Too Young" by and performed by Hi-Five; "Mama Don't Take No Mess"

by Ice Cube, Yo-Yo, Boogie Men Music, performed by Yo-Yo; "Hangin' Out" by and

performed by 2 Live Crew; "Just Ask Me To" by Al B. Sure, Kyle West, Chubb Rock, performed by Tevin Campbell; "Me and You" by Raphael Wiggins, performed by Tony! Toni! Toné!

"Spirit" by Jimi Dright, Darrell Savage, Solomon Isom, performed by Force One Network; "It's Your Life" by T. Shaw, performed by Too Short; "Growin' Up in the Hood" by Aaron Tyler, André Manuel, Terry Allen, performed by Compton's Most Wanted; "Every Single Weekend" by Ice Cube, KAM, Boogie Men Music, performed by KAM; "Just a Friendly Game of Baseball" by William Paul Mitchell, Kevin McKenzie, Shawn McKenzie, performed by Main Source; "Setembro (Brazilian Wedding Song)" by Ivan Lins, Gilson Peranzetta, performed by Quincy Jones, Take 6, Sarah Vaughan; "Let's Go" by and performed by Kool Moe Dee; "How to Survive in South Central" by and performed by Ice Cube

Wardrobe
Men: Darryle Johnson
Women: Shirlene Williams

Make-up
Marietta A. Carter
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor
Patrick Drummond
Sound Editors
Lucy Goldshaw
Wayne Griffin

ADR Editor
Renée Tondelli
Sound Recordist
Veda Campbell

Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Paul Massey
Don Digrolamo
Bob Glass

ADR:
Dean Drabin
Sound Effects Editors
Bob Newlan
Pam Bentkowski

Foley
Dan O'Connell
Alicia Stevenson

Production Assistants
Doris Nomathande
Dixon
Dion Vines
Steven D. Levine
Joseph Doughrity
Gregory Allain
Alex S. Samuel
Gabrielle D. Buford
Post-production: Lisa Cholodenko

Stunt Co-ordinator
Bob Minor
Stunts
Ousaun Elam
Gérard Williams

Cast
Ice Cube
Doughboy Baker
Cuba Gooding Jr
Tre Styles
Morris Chestnut
Ricky Baker
Larry Fishburne
Furious Styles
Nia Long
Brandi
Tyra Ferrell
Mrs Baker
Angela Bassett
Reva Styles
Redge Green
Chris
Desi Arnez Hines II
Tre, age 10
Baha Jackson
Doughboy, age 10
Donovan McCrary
Ricky, age 10
Kenneth A. Brown
Little Chris
Hudhail Al-Amir
SAT Man
Mia Bell
Female Club Member
Lexie Bigham
Mad Dog
Nicole Brown
Brandi, age 10
Ceal
Sheryl
Darneicea Corley
Keisha
John Cothran Jr
Lewis Crump
Na' Blonka Durden
Trina
Susan Falcon
Mrs Olaf
Jesse Ferguson
Officer Coffey
Dedrick D. Gobert
Dooky
Kareem J. Grimes
Ice-cream Truck Kid
Tammy Hanson
Rosa
Valentino Harrison
Bobby, age 10
Dee Dee Jacobs
Renee
Kirk Kinder
Officer Graham
Meta King
Brandi's Mom
Regina King
Shalika
Whitman Mayo
Old Man
Jimmy Lee Newman
Kid
Alysia M. Rogers
Shanice
Esther Scott
Tisha's Grandmother
Leonette Scott
Tisha
Vonté Sweet
Ric Rock
Baldwin C. Sykes
Monster
Raymond D. Turner
Ferris
Yolanda Whittaker
Yo Yo
Lloyd Avery II
Malcolm Norington
Knuckleheads
Leanear Lane
Don Nelson
Gangsters

10,078 feet
112 minutes

USA 1991

Director: John Singleton

● South Central Los Angeles, 1984. Unable to control her increasingly wild son Tre, Reva Styles sends him to live with his father Furious, who can teach him to "be a man". Tre develops a close friendship with neighbouring youths Ricky and Doughboy Baker, two half-brothers – living with their single mother – whose natures are diametrically opposed: Ricky is a tall but unaggressive football devotee; Doughboy a heavy-set tearaway whose headstrong bulliness soon leads to his arrest.

Seven years later, Tre is reunited with his childhood friends at a barbecue celebrating Doughboy's release from jail. Tre has developed a seemingly sturdy relationship with Furious, and proudly discusses his adolescent sexual exploits with his father; in reality, Tre's Catholic girlfriend Brandi will not permit intercourse before marriage and the boy remains a virgin. Furious, a financial adviser who arranges mortgages for local people, speaks out against violence between rival black gangs as merely serving white oppression.

Eager to enter college on a football scholarship, Ricky (who has now fathered a son) takes his SAT exams with Tre. That night, at a local streetside teenage hangout, a gang member harasses Ricky and is repelled by a revolver-brandishing Doughboy. Later, Ricky and Tre are hassled by two policemen (one white, one black). At Brandi's house, Tre collapses in tears before declaring his love for Brandi, to whom he makes love for the first time.

Some days later, Ricky and Tre visit a local store, and are pursued by armed gang members; Tre escapes but Ricky is shot dead. Doughboy carries his body home, while Tre rushes to collect a gun from his father's house. Despite Furious' impassioned plea, Tre briefly joins Doughboy in a search for Ricky's killers before relenting and returning home alone. Doughboy locates the gang at a nearby car park and executes the three culprits. Next morning, a doleful and weary Doughboy tells Tre that he regrets what he has done. A letter arrives informing Mrs Baker that Ricky's SAT grades would have earned him a place at college. A postscript recounts Doughboy's death at the hands of gunmen two weeks later. Tre and Brandi move to neighbouring colleges.

● John Singleton describes his impressive directorial début as a film about "boys becoming men", which pleads for "African-American men to take more ►

◀ responsibility for raising their children, especially the boys". Certainly, the theme of paternal strength is a key element in Singleton's polemical narrative, in which each character's chances of survival are defined by the presence or absence of a sturdy father figure. "I can't teach him how to be a man", declares Reva Styles as she hands her unruly child over to the character-building custody of his father, Furious. "That's your job".

This same obsession with an absence of guiding paternal power also underwrites Singleton's analysis of the inter-black rivalry which renders the 'hood dwellers impotent in their struggle for better living conditions. Just as Doughboy and Ricky are separated by the ghosts of their divided fathers, so the 'hood dwellers turn upon each other because they have no common cultural leadership. Similarly, despite his brash pronouncements to the contrary, the adolescent Tre is revealed mid-way through the film to harbour a deep-seated fear of intercourse stemming from his terror of becoming a father - which he views as the ultimate burden.

Within this framework, Furious Styles serves not only as a father to Tre, but also as a prototype leader who will conduct his people out of the wilderness. His apparently unprovoked and prosaic address to the local citizens, wherein he lectures on the evils of white 'gentrification', may seem to jar with the harsh naturalism adopted elsewhere. But thematically it is entirely consistent; Furious is the voice of salvation, the absent father returning to restore order to the cultural chaos.

Directed with bold certainty by Singleton, *Boyz n the Hood* thus emerges less as a portrayal of the rigours of urban life than a romantic elegy to the stable, patriarchal family unit. The film clearly addresses itself to young audiences, or more specifically young male audiences, for there is little here of relevance to women. Singleton (it seems) is preaching not only to the fathers who currently fail their offspring, but to the children themselves, urging them to become the better fathers of the future.

In this endeavour he is amply aided by the fine cast who more than do justice to an intelligent script. Larry Fishburne continues to be a matchless screen presence in the central role of Furious, but the real surprise is rapper Ice Cube, whose portrayal of the downcast Doughboy is as graceful and understated as it is unexpected. Bold, boisterous and unashamedly boyish, *Boyz n the Hood* paints a limited canvas with a lively palette.

Mark Kermode

City Slickers

Certificate

12
Distributor
First Independent
Production Companies
Castle Rock Entertainment
In association with Nelson Entertainment
A Face production
Executive Producer
Billy Crystal
Producer
Irby Smith
Line Producer
Spain:
Greg Dark
Production Associates
Barbara A. Hall
Susan Vanderbeck
Production Co-ordinators
Hwei-Chu Meng
Spain:
Christy Dimmig
Production Manager
Edward D. Markley
Unit Manager
Spain:
Mairin Blake
Location Managers
Ido Lampton
Enochs Jnr
Phillips "Flip"
Wylly Jnr
Barbara Heller
2nd Unit Directors
Mickey Gilbert
Spain:
Fraser Heston
Casting
Pam Dixon
Associate:
Marla Shertz Wilson
New Mexico:
Sally Jackson
Extras:
Cinex Casting
Ken Post
Central Casting
Assistant Directors
Jim Chory
Jeffrey Wetzel
Irby Jay Smith Jnr
Additional:
Douglas C. Metzger
Jerry Ballew
Nina Kostroff
Spain:
Tony Brand
James A. Maquire
Screenplay
Lowell Ganz
Babaloo Mandel
Director of Photography
Dean Semler
Colour
CFI
Additional Photography
Spain:
Robert Eber
Fernando Espiga
2nd Unit Photography
Spain:
Martin Fuhrer
Matte Photography
Paul Curley
Aerial Photography
Ron Goodman
Camera Operators
Gary Kibbe
Additional:
George A. Loomis
Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation
Matte Artist
Rocco Gioffre
Animation
Kurtz & Friends
Editor
O. Nicholas Brown
Production Designer
Lawrence G. Paull
Art Director
Mark Mansbridge
Set Design
Stan Tropp
Geoff Hubbard
Set Decorator
Rick Simpson

Set Dressers

John A. Scott III
William K. Wright
Gary Kundroff
Art Department Co-ordinator
Renee Faia
Storyboard Artists
Dick Lasley
Tom Southwell
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Kenneth D. Pepiot
Special Effects
Albert Delgado
Larz Anderson
Mechanical Animal Effects
KNB EFX
Supervisors:
Robert Kurtzman
Greg Nicotero
Howard Berger
Music
Marc Shaiman
Additional:
Hummie Mann
Music Directors
Mark McKenzie
Hummie Mann
Orchestrations
Dan Spaethe
Music Editor
Scott Stambler
Songs
"Young at Heart"
by Carolyn Leigh,
Johnny Richards,
performed by Jimmy
Durante; "Tumblin"
Tumble Weeds" by
Bob Nolan; "Rawhide"
by Dimitri Tiomkin,
Ned Washington;
"Bonanza" by Jay
Livingston, Ray Evans;
"Where Did My Heart
Go?" by Mark
Shaiman, performed
by James Ingram
Costume
Design:
Judy Ruskin
Supervisors:
Deborah Lancaster
Christopher Lawrence
Barbara Ayers
Make-up Artists
Kenneth Chase
Todd A. McIntosh
Additional:
Peter Montagna
Title Design
Wayne Fitzgerald
Supervising Sound Editors
Louis L. Edemann
Charles L. Campbell
Sound Editors
Nils C. Jensen
Chuck Neely
Leonard T. Geschke
Bob O'Brien
Subail F. Kafity
Colin Mouat
ADR
Supervisors:
Larry Singer
Alan Nineberg
Editor:
Thomas Whiting
Sound Recordists
Robert Eber
Music:
Joel Moss
ADR Recordist
Charleen Richards
Foley Recordist
Mary Jo Lang
Sound Re-recordists
Kevin O'Connell
Rick Kline
Special Vocal Effects
Frank Welker
ADR Voices
Mickie McGowan
Foley
Kevin Bartnof
Hilda Hodges
Production Assistants
L. David Silva
Darin Rivetti
Mitzie E. Corbin
Sonya Ooten
David Keane
David Rudder

Additional:

Leslie Morrow
Lara C. Porzak
Ken Palmer
Sol Rivera
Ernie Paul
Jilann Spitzmiller
Marc Maxey
Stunt Co-ordinators
Mickey Gilbert
Jerry Gatlin
Stunts
Brian Burrows
Lance Gilbert
Troy Gilbert
Tim Gilbert
Stunt Double
Chema
Animal Trainer
Carol Sonheim
Wranglers
Michael Boyle
Steve Hanna
Clay Lilley
Richard Lilley
Ross Loney
Larry McKinney
Darwin "Slick"
Mitchell
Stanley Pierce
Dave Rodgers
Dan Spaethe
Frank Russell
Reid Overstreet
Richard Robbins
Charlie Russell
Charlie Taylor
Helicopter Pilots
Cliff Fleming
Craig Hosking

Cast

Billy Crystal
Mitch Robbins
Daniel Stern
Phil Berquist
Bruno Kirby
Ed Furillo
Patricia Wettig
Barbara Robbins
Helen Slater
Bonnie Rayburn
Jack Palance
Curly
Josh Mostel
Barry Shalowitz
David Paymer
Ira Shalowitz
Noble Willingham
Clay Stone
Bill Henderson
Ben Jessup
Tracey Walter
Cookie
Jeffrey Tambor
Lou
Phill Lewis
Steve Jessup
Kyle Secor
Jeff
Dean Hall
T. R.
Karla Tamburrelli
Arlene Berquist
Yeardeley Smith
Nancy
Robert Costanzo
Sal
Walker Brandt
Kim
Molly McClure
Millie Stone
Lindsay Crystal
Holly Robbins
Jane Alden
Mrs Green
Jake Gyllenhaal
Daniel Robbins
Danielle Harris
Eddie Palmer
Kids
Howard Honig
Skycap
Fred Maio
Doctor
Jayne Meadows
Mitch's Mom
Alan Charof
Mitch's Dad

10,241 feet
114 minutes

USA 1991

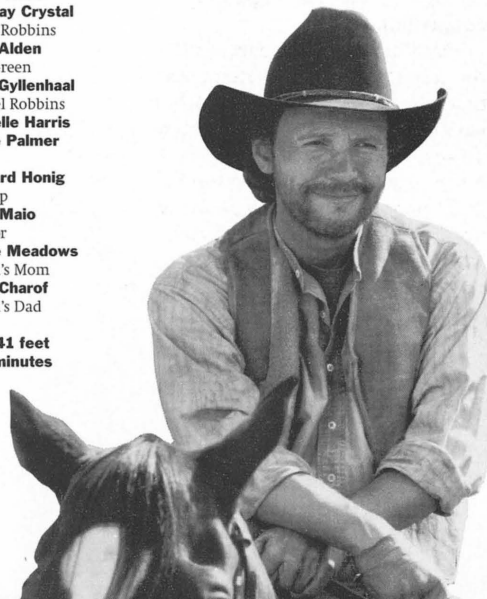
Director: Ron Underwood

● Mitch Robbins, a radio ad salesman who feels threatened by approaching middle age, Ed Furillo, a swinger who has recently married a much younger woman, and Phil Berquist, a henpecked supermarket manager about to be divorced, are three friends who take annual holidays together, engaging in macho pursuits like the Pamplona bull run. This year, the trio have opted to go on a cattle drive from New Mexico to Colorado with an assortment of other vacationers - black father-and-son dentists Ben and Steve Jessup, ice cream tycoon brothers Barry and Ira Shalowitz, and single woman Bonnie Rayburn - under the guidance of Curly, a weathered trail boss, and Jeff and T.R., a pair of untrustworthy cowboys.

Initially, the vacationers are inept drovers - Mitch causes a stampede with his automatic coffee grinder - but gradually they become more competent. While rounding up strays from the stampede, Mitch helps Curly deliver a calf, whom he names Norman. Curly dies quietly one night, and the drunken Jeff and T.R. take over, until Mitch insists they continue with the drive, whereupon they take off. Cookie, the cook, is injured when his wagon turns over, so the dentists agree to stay with him.

The vacationers manage to keep the drive going, and the trio overcome their prolonged immaturity. Mitch realises the value of his marriage and family, Ed admits that he truly cares for his young wife, and Phil, cutting loose after years of oppression, initiates a relationship with Bonnie. Finally, Mitch leads the group as they help the cattle ford a raging river in a storm, and get them through, whereupon they learn that the herd is to be sold for slaughter. Returning to the city, Mitch introduces

Angst cure: Billy Crystal



his wife and children to their new pet, Norman.

Screenwriters Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel may have more to do with establishing Ron Howard's directorial image than Howard himself, and this collaboration with Ron Underwood contains many of the elements that made *Parenthood* a crowd-pleasing success. Medicine-like dollops of 'serious' content are sweetened by a satisfyingly comic confection of snappy dialogue, cowboy pratfalls and genre spoof. The three heroes are criticised for their immaturity, yet their values are seen as far more seductive than those imparted by the token wife/mother figures, whether it be Phil's harridan or Mitch's calmly understanding spouse.

The funniest example of this occurs in one of the campfire conversations that pervade the movie in avowed homage to Hawks' *Red River* . Bonnie expresses incredulity at the male obsession with baseball trivia, recalling an absurd scrap of knowledge of the type an ex-boyfriend used to prize, only to find that all the men present share it. When asked what women like to talk about, she can only come up with "Relationships, I guess", missing the point that male bonding, manifested in exchanges of baseball knowledge and ridiculous re-enactments of movie-derived macho fantasies, constitutes the real thing, while talking about relationships merely signals their failure.

Following the indulgent games with genre played in Underwood's debut feature *Tremors* , *City Slickers* not only parodies the Western but harks back to the Tony Randall-Jack Lemmon-style glossy comedies with their cartoon credits and pointed jabs at upper-middle-class life styles. Billy Crystal pulls off a *tour de force* in an early scene where, summoned to his daughter's junior school class to give a talk about his job, he delivers a depressing but hilarious meditation on the future course of the children's lives as he takes them through middle-class angst and disappointment.

City Slickers unashamedly recalls the past glories of the Western, now that the success of *Dances with Wolves* has allowed affection for the latterly unfashionable genre to resurface. A masterly performance is given by Jack Palance as the leathery cowboy, named after the hero of *Oklahoma!* , who strides through the movie backlit like a demi-god. His big speech – a reminiscence of the only woman he ever loved, whom he saw for barely a moment and whose image he has treasured all his life – is played with a deeply affecting honesty and unironic quietness.

Kim Newman

Doc Hollywood

Certificate

12

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Warner Bros

Executive Producer

Marc Merson

Producers

Susan Solt

Deborah D. Johnson

Associate Producer

Neil B. Shulman

Production Associate

Pat Stevens

Production Office Co-ordinator

Myrna Huffman

Unit Production Manager

Robert P. Cohen

Location Managers

Steph Benselman

Pavel Cerny

Casting

Marion Dougherty

Owens Hill

Extras:

Peggy Curtin Ellis

Location:

Diprma Casting

Assistant Directors

J. Stephen Buck

Joseph Burns

Lucille Ouyang

Screenplay

Jeffrey Price

Peter S. Seaman

Daniel Pyne

Based on the novel

What? ...Dead Again by

Neil B. Shulman

Adaptation

Laurian Leggett

Director of Photography

Michael Chapman

Colour

Technicolor

Process

Photography

Hansard

Camera Operator

Michael Genne

Video Operator

Paul Murphy

Opticals

Pacific Title

Editors

Priscilla Nedd-

Friendly

Film:

Gregg London

Production Designer

Lawrence Miller

Art Directors

Eva Anna Bohn

Dale Allen Pelton

Set Decorator

Cloudia Rebar

Master Scenic Artists

Thomas Ivanjack

Kelly D. Hudson

Scenic Artists

Claudia Ivanjack

Florida:

John Kelly

Bill Darrow

Special Effects Supervisor

Paul Stewart

Music

Carter Burwell

Music Extracts

"Concerto for Jew's

Harp, Mandora and

Orchestra in E Major"

by Johann Georg

Albrechtsberger,

performed by Munich

Chamber Orchestra;

"Kije's Wedding"

(from "Lieutenant

Kije") by Sergei

Prokofiev

Music Editor

Adam Smalley

Songs

"The One and Only"

by Nik Kershaw,

performed by Chesney

Hawkes; "The

Millwood Stomp"

by Carter Burwell;

"Crazy" by Willie

Nelson, performed

by Patsy Cline;

"Pomone Waltz"

performed by Albert

Sandler; "Buck's

Nouvelle Jole Blon"

by Stanley Dural Jnr,

performed by

Buckwheat Zydeco;

"Le Vieux Boeuf et

le Vieux Charriot"

performed by Aubrey

DeVillie; "La Robe de

Rosalie", "Les Piniers"

performed by Adam

Landreneau, Cyprien

Landreneau; "Gettin'

Up the Stairs"

performed by Clyde

Davenport; "Standing

in the Need of Prayer"

performed by The

Stanley Brothers,

The Clinch Mountain

Boys; "Bailero" (from

"Songs of the

Auvergne") by Marie-

Joseph Canteloube

de Malaret, performed

by Netania Devrath;

"Polegnala e Todora"

by Philip Koutev

Costume Design

Richard Hornung

Costume Supervisor

Joie Hutchinson

Costumers

Men:

Michael Joseph Long

Women:

Doris Alaime

Make-up Artists

Hallie D'Amore

Michael J. Fox;

Bron Roylance

Additional:

Norman Leavitt

Title Design

Elaine Bass

Saul Bass

Supervising Sound Editor

Richard King

Sound Editors

Martin Maryska

Albert Gasser

Jay Dranch

Ed Callahan

ADR Editor

Clifford Latimer

Foley Editors

Christopher Flick

Christine Danelski

John Allen Duvall

Sound Recordist

Ken King

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Chris Jenkins

D.M. Hemphill

Mark Smith

Richard Portman

Medical Advisers

Betsy Jackson

Barbara Maywood

Consultants

Surgical:

Steven Hoefflin

Jeffrey I. Resnick

Michael M. Gurdin

Nicholas Cassisi

Fitness:

Jan Matkoziach

Stunt Co-ordinator

Charlie Croughwell

Animal Trainer

Trademark Animal

Talent

Cast

Michael J. Fox

Dr Benjamin Stone

Julie Warner

Lou

Barnard Hughes

Dr Hogue

Woody Harrelson

Henry "Hank" Gordon

David Ogden Stiers

Nick Nicholson

Frances Sternhagen

Lillian

George Hamilton

Dr Halberstrom

Bridget Fonda

Nancy Lee

Mel Winkler

Melvin

Helen Martin

Maddie

Roberts Blossom

Judge Evans

Tom Lacy

Cotton

Macon McCalmán

Aubrey Draper

Raye Birk

Simon Tidwell

Eyde Byrde

Nurse Packer

William Cowart

Lane

Amzie Strickland

Violet

Time Winters

Kyle

K. T. Vogt

Mary

Jordon Lund

John Crawford

Robert Munns

Mortimer

Douglas Brush

McClary

Barry Sobel

Shulman

Amanda Junette

Donatelli

Emma

Billy Gillespie

Zeb's Father

Kathy Poling

Zeb's Mother

Eric Bechtel

Zeb

Cristi Conaway

Receptionist

Kelly Jo Minter

Mulready

Michael Caton-Jones

Maître d'

Michael Chapman

Shooting Gallery

Operator

Ted Davis

Taxi Driver

Melanie MacQueen

Woman with Spider

Adele Malis-Morey

Woman with Glasses

Darrell Jay Cook

Huge Man

Dan Charles

Boy at Shooting

Gallery

Kirsche Smith

Nurse

David Thompkins

Medic

Dan Bell

Patient

Karen Hartman-

Golden

Vince Burnes

Loonies

Roxanne Benseman

Farm Lady

Kelly Roland

Squash Queen

Janis Bjork

◀ expected and more – a luxurious mausoleum dedicated to vanity and exploitation. When Ben learns that Lou and Hank have split up and that Hank has left Grady for good, he recognises where he properly belongs and returns to the Squash Capital of the South.

● Drawn, like so many British film-makers, to the heartland of movie history, Michael Caton-Jones has hitched his wagon to a team of characters from the Ford, Capra and Sturges stables, almost as if, after steering the "Memphis Belle" precariously back to base, he had decided to retreat Westward on furlough with her crew. Grady is the kind of community most of the young flyers could have come from and would surely have returned to, subsiding placidly into family doctors, mayors, squash farmers, and other children of the corn. All three Caton-Jones features show the same affectionate concern for innocents in enemy territory, for stories of small groups whose interlocking lives force them to face the consequences of their upbringing and of their mistakes.

As a stylist, though, Caton-Jones has yet to find his feet. The first half of *Doc Hollywood* has an opportunistic air, hustling along in the glib colours of a Michael J. Fox sit-com episode. At its worst, the film would have us contemplate its protagonists urinating on red ribbons in a jolly ceremony of woodland complicity; at its best, there is George Hamilton as an oleaginous plastic surgeon discussing golf over a quick nip-and-tuck on the operating table.

The trouble with such extremes is that they infuse a sense of triviality even into the story's gentler episodes which would appear, amid fireworks, car crashes and the like, to have something more serious in mind. This is much assisted by Julie Warner's performance, clothed in increasingly confident tones after a vulnerable beginning; delightfully, she pretends not to notice that the continuing secret of Fox's success is that under the cynical one-liners he remains incorruptibly homespun, a diminutive Mr Smith who has returned unscathed from his Washington adventure.

All the other furniture for this kind of yarn has been faithfully assembled by Caton-Jones' production team, along with such reliable local colour as can be provided by Roberts Blossom, Frances Sternhagen and Barnard Hughes with the twitch of an eyebrow. Even Bridget Fonda, whose cameo role as manhunter comes from another place and time, conforms with the general mood of well-intentioned, if somewhat spasmodic, ingratiation.

Philip Strick

Drop Dead Fred



Issue raising: Phoebe Cates, Rik Mayall...

Certificate 12
Distributor Rank
Production Companies Working Title Films (USA) For Polygram
Executive Producers Tim Bevan Carlos Davis Anthony Fingleton
Producer Paul Webster
Production Co-ordinator Julie Hartley
Unit Production Manager Mary McLaglen
Location Manager Tim Hillman
Post-production Supervisor Clarissa Troop
Casting Lynn Kressel Minneapolis: Lynn Blumenthal
Extras: Richter Casting
Assistant Directors Michael Waxman Dan Stillman Julie Herrin
Screenplay Carlos Davis Anthony Fingleton Suggested by a story by Elizabeth Livingston
Director of Photography Peter Deming
In colour
Additional Photography Sandi Sissel Francis Kenny
2nd Unit Photography Gregory Gardiner
Special Photographic Effects Paul Gentry
Animation Photography Pam Vick
Visual Effects VCE Supervisor: Kevin Kutchaver
Producer: Peter Kuran
VCE Co-ordinator: Jacqueline Zietlow
Editorial: Jo Martin Tracy Singleton
Optical Effects Brian Griffin Dave Emerson Todd Hall Bill Conner Pete Martin Gary George

Graphic Illustrator Tim Blough
Stop Motion Animator Doug Beswick
Editor Marshall Harvey
Production Designer Joseph T. Garrity
Art Director Randall Schmook
Art Department Co-ordinator Barbara Gorrie
Set Decorator Colin Tugwell
Set Dressers Cher Lafrenière
On-set: Niel Williams
Lead Scenic Artist Anne Hyvarinen
Storyboard Artist Pete Von Sholly
Sculptures Mitch DeVane
Special Effects Co-ordinator Bob Cooper
Models Jim Belohovek
Puppets Painter: Margaret Prentick
Costume: Teresa Burkett
Music Randy Edelman
Music Editor Kathy Durning
Costume Design Carol Wood
Wardrobe Supervisor Daryl Kerrigan
Make-up Artists Key: Lizbeth J. Williamson
Marsha Mason: Richard Blair
Special Make-up Effects Christopher Johnson
Title Design Joe Ranft
Animation: Steven Segal
Supervising Sound Editor Michael Redbourn
Sound Editors Joe Holsen Ed Lachman Sam Crutcher
Foley Editor Tova Szabo
Sound Recordists Bob Anderson Jnr
Music: Elton Ahi
Sound Re-recordists Robert W. Glass Jnr Richard D. Rogers Grover B. Helsley
Sound Transfer John Soukup
Sound Effects Victor Iorillo

ADR Artists Voices Off
Reva Rose
Fine Arts Consultant David Sodergren
Production Assistants Robin Keller Emily Stevens Chrysa Freeman Samantha Fingleton Priscilla Fingleton
Stunt Co-ordinator Ky Michaelson
Acrobat Double John Barrett

Cast
Phoebe Cates Elizabeth Cronin
Rik Mayall Drop Dead Fred
Marsha Mason Polly
Tim Matheson Charles Cronin
Bridget Fonda Annabella
Carrie Fisher Janie
Keith Charles Murray
Ashley Peldon Young Elizabeth
Daniel Gerroll Nigel
Ron Eldard Mickey Bunce
Eleanor Mondale Attractive Customer
Bob Reid Judge Dubben
Peter Thoenke Arsonist
Sjoukje De Jong Douma
Grandma Bunce Paul Holmes
Man in Speedboat Steve Cochran
Robert Meyzen Waiters
Daniel Buchen Doctor Ryland
Marie Mathay Concerned Mom
Peter Breitmayer Go to Hell Herman
Clark Niederjohn Velcro Head
Tom Bethke Graggy
Elizabeth Gray Namby Pamby
Cheryl Hawker Nurse
Michael Welker Waiter at Wine Gala
Kelly Benson Natalie
Cathy Lind Hayes Ms Fuzzcock

8,911 feet
99 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Ate de Jong

● As a child, Elizabeth Cronin is oppressed by her mother Polly and retreats into an imaginary friendship with "Drop Dead Fred", a sprite who eggs her on to destructive mischief. In 1969, Polly cures her daughter by trapping Fred in a jack-in-the-box, her cruelty prompting her put-upon husband Nigel to leave the family. Twenty-one years later, Elizabeth is married to a philandering car dealer, Charles, who has just left her for his mistress, Annabella.

Polly bullies Elizabeth into moving back home, and she finds the jack-in-the-box in her childhood closet, unsealing it and releasing a still-active Fred. The latter reverts to his old ways, and messes up Polly's pristine house, leaving Elizabeth to take the blame. Later, he wrecks her date with Mickey Bunce, a childhood friend she has recently met again, and sinks her friend Janie's houseboat. Polly tries to make Elizabeth over in her own image, but Fred encourages her to find her own style and sets out to help her win Charles back.

At a wine-tasting event Charles has organised, Elizabeth meets Annabella, who is appalled to find that she is not the mousy nobody Charles has described. Polly takes Elizabeth to a doctor who specialises in treating the 'imaginary friend' syndrome and who prescribes a course of pills: the imaginary friends in the waiting room tell Fred that the medication will banish him. Charles returns to Elizabeth and she takes the pills, causing Fred to sicken. But Fred overhears Charles calling Annabella to reaffirm their arrangement, and he alerts Elizabeth.

In Fred's fantasy house, Elizabeth finds her younger self trapped as Polly had trapped Fred and liberates her own childishness. Fred then tells her that his job is done and he must leave her. Elizabeth orders Charles out, and Annabella also ends her relationship with him. Elizabeth initiates a reconciliation with her mother, and starts seeing Mickey, whose daughter Natalie has begun to have Fred as an imaginary friend...

● Very occasionally, *Drop Dead Fred* touches on the tangle of fascinating issues raised by the 'imaginary friend' concept (a ghost story favourite, from John Collier to Lisa Tuttle). But for most of its length, it is content to be *Harvey* reimagined for the *Beetlejuice* generation, with strident gags standing in for magic and relentless obviousness overriding the disturbing ambiguity that might have made the film work. It does

manage to suggest, without hammering its points home, the lack in Elizabeth's upbringing that might drive her to invent Drop Dead Fred. But when it comes to showing the liberating effect Fred has on her, the film descends into crude slapstick that escalates from an acceptably childish obsession with snot and poo into such thumping sub-Blake Edwards jokes as a sinking houseboat or chaos spreading through an exclusive restaurant.

Phoebe Cates reveals an unexpected depth as the heroine who isn't sure about anything, and whose imaginary friend's anarchy is as threatening to her as it is liberating. But Rik Mayall's star turn is relentlessly soft-edged, never as potentially monstrous as such obvious equivalents as Michael Keaton's Beetle Juice or Johnny Depp's Edward Scissorhands. The enervating hyperactivity of the film is, if anything, made even more irksome by its strengths: the supporting characters are unusually well thought-out, especially in regard to their relationships with Elizabeth: Marsha Mason's Polly calmly and evenly suggesting the mannered venom that has poisoned her daughter's life, and earning her nickname "the mega-beast" (an unimaginable expression in 1969, of course); Tim Matheson's creepily suave husband, embodying precisely the hollow charm that would appeal to the disappointed Elizabeth.

But the 'money scenes' of the movie are just standard riffs, inadequately played: Fred's head being flattened into a tray shape and inflating; the old *Harvey*/ *Blithe Spirit*/ *Topper* business of people offending other people by conversing with invisible presences. Typical of the whole approach is the scene in the psychiatrist's waiting room, which pulls a brilliant stunt as the information that the doctor specialises in the 'imaginary friend syndrome' is followed by a pan around the room that shows each child accompanied by a solicitous parent and a bizarre imaginary friend. The joke is then ruined by a frenetic and pointless scene in which Fred and his peers get together to do very little and the whole sub-plot is promptly dropped.

Kim Newman



...Ashley Peldon, Marsha Mason

Edward II



Steven Waddington: substituting one order...

Certificate

18

Distributor

Palace Pictures

Production Company

Edward II Ltd
A Working Title
production
For British Screen,
BBC Films

Executive Producers

Sarah Radclyffe
Simon Curtis

Producers

Steve Clark-Hall
Antony Root

Production

Co-ordinator

Mairi Brett

Production Manager

Sarah Swords

Associate Director

Ken Butler

Assistant Directors

Cilla Ware
Ian Francis

Jeremy Johns

Screenplay

Derek Jarman

Stephen McBride

Ken Butler

Based on the play by

Christopher Marlowe

Director of

Photography

Ian Wilson

In colour

Editor

George Akers

Production Designer

Christopher Hobbs

Art Director

Rick Eyres

Music

Simon Fisher Turner

Music Extracts

"Divertimento
in F Major K138"

by Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart, performed by

Elektra Quartet;
"Dance of the Sugar
Plum Fairy" by Pyotr

Tchaikovsky,
performed by

Dean Broderick
Music Performed by

Simon Fisher Turner
Dean Broderick

Richard Preston
Melanie Pappenheim

Glen Fox
Songs

"Every Time We Say
Goodbye" by Cole

Porter, performed by

Annie Lennox;
"Jingle Bells" by

James Pierpont,
performed by Simon

Fisher Turner
Choreographers

Lloyd Newson
Nigel Charnock

Costume Design
Sandy Powell

Wardrobe
Supervisor

Paul Minter
Make-up

Morag Ross
Sound Editor

Ean Wood
Sound Recordist

George Richards
Bill McCarthy

Sound Re-recordist
Peter Maxwell

Cast
Steven Waddington

Edward II
Kevin Collins

Lightborn
Andrew Tiernan

Piers Gaveston
John Lynch

Spencer
Dudley Sutton

Bishop of Winchester
Tilda Swinton

Isabella
Jerome Flynn

Kent
Jody Graber

Prince Edward
Nigel Terry

Mortimer
Jill Balcon

Barbara New
Andrea Miller

Brian Mitchell
David Glover

John Quentin
Andrew Charleson

Chorus of Nobility
Roger Hammond

Bishop
Allan Corduner

Poet
Annie Lennox

Singer

Tony Forsyth

Captive Policeman

Lloyd Newson

Nigel Charnock

Dancers

Mark Davis

Andy Jeffrey

Sailors

Barry John Clarke

Man with Snake

John Henry Duncan

Thomas Duncan

Altar Boys

Giles De Montigny

Jonathan Stables

Michael Watkins

Robb Dennis

Soldiers on Guard

David Oliver

Chris McHallem

Chris Adamson

Danny Earl

Thugs

Kim Dare

Kristina Overton

Wild Girls

Trevor Skingle

Gym Instructor

Christopher Hobbs

Equerry

Sandy Powell

Kate Temple

Seamstresses

Andrew Lee Bolton

Masseur

Liz Ranken

Renee Eyre

Sharon Munro

Sexy Girls

Daniel Bevan

Ian Francis

James Norton

Tristram Cones

Youths

Jocelyn Pook (Viola)

Abigail Brown

(Violin)

Sonia Slany (Violin)

Dinah Beamish

(Cello)

Elektra Quartet

8,100 feet

90 minutes

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Derek Jarman

Imprisoned in a dungeon,
guarded by the jailer

Lightborn, King Edward II of England recalls his reign. Newly crowned, he writes to his lover Piers Gaveston in France, summoning him to share his kingdom. Reunited, Edward and Gaveston look forward to a life of hedonism, but Gaveston's return is greeted scornfully by the Bishop of Winchester. With Edward's blessing, Gaveston has the bishop beaten up and imprisoned.

Rejecting the love of his queen Isabella, Edward appoints Gaveston to the nobility, despite the advice of his brother Kent. The enraged nobles, headed by the soldier Mortimer, resolve to take action and petition Edward to banish Gaveston, but Gaveston remains defiant, and humiliates Isabella by feigning to make a pass at her. Faced with the risk of being deposed, Edward is persuaded to banish Gaveston. But when the rift between Edward and Isabella deepens, the queen has Gaveston recalled, intending to have him killed.

Isabella and Mortimer become lovers. Snubbed by the nobles on his return to England, Gaveston returns their insults and is stabbed by Mortimer. Edward quarrels with Kent, who joins Isabella's camp. Gaveston flees, but is caught and killed by Mortimer's troops. Edward leads the people in revolt, and kills the policeman who garrotted Gaveston. Mortimer captures Edward and his follower Spencer and kills the latter.

Mortimer and Isabella prepare to reign together, and Isabella summons Lightborn, an assassin, to kill the captive Edward. Kent quarrels with Isabella and Mortimer, and is killed by Isabella. In prison, Edward envisages being murdered by Lightborn, but the latter refuses to kill him. Now deposed, Isabella and Mortimer sit in a cage lamenting their fate, while Prince Edward - Edward's son - stands triumphant guard over them.

Billed in the published book-of-the-script, *Queer Edward II*, as the play "improved by Derek Jarman", this film is partly recognisable as Marlowe and wholly recognisable as Jarman. After the imagistic patchwork of *The Garden*, Jarman returns to the enclosed theatrical format of *Caravaggio*, staging Marlowe's narrative on a sparse but adaptable single set. A mud-walled dungeon stands in for the cavernous interior of Edward's castle and for exterior locations, with forbidding metalwork added for the prison. By flaunting the relative poverty of the film's resources, as well as its ►

◀ ability to transcend them, Jarman proclaims his adherence to the aesthetics and ethics of low-budget film-making, and asserts his own position as an economically and ideologically marginal director – a position he has embraced as much as he has had it foisted upon him.

Jarman has shuffled sections of the play, excised its minor characters and superfluous incident, and turned the narrative inside out by having Edward review his reign from prison. Above all, the famous death-by-poker climax is staged as a lurid red-lit fantasy, with Edward reprieved for a final speech. Although such cutting-and-pasting of a sacrosanct 'classic' might seem cavalier (ironically, the film is partly funded by the BBC, arch-preserver of the tradition), this *Edward* is a close reading of the text, paying critical attention to its sexual-political meanings, sometimes tweaking them for good measure (hence, Isabella's "Is it not strange that he is thus bewitched?" becomes "Is it not queer...").

Given the play's history of conservative and bowdlerised interpretations, *Edward II* is clearly ripe to be reclaimed as a gay myth for an age of state-endorsed homophobia. Marlowe's play ends with a return to order after political and sexual turmoil; in Jarman's version, when the child prince, lipsticked and high-heeled, finally dances to "The Sugar Plum Fairy", there can be no doubt which order triumphs. Yet this reading yields more problematic results than is immediately apparent. Rather than present a clear-cut story of gay martyrdom, Jarman overlays the play's complexities with his own thematic obsessions, producing a contradictory film which is readable less in terms of sexual politics than in terms of the code of the 'Jarman film' as a genre in itself.

For example, Gaveston's violent revenge on the bishop – carried out with a gang of scowling thugs – seems out of proportion to the offense. In the original, this transgression clearly identifies

Gaveston as a villain, but it seems incongruous in a version that casts him as a victim. The violence is further complicated by its erotic overtones. In their scene with the bishop, Edward and Gaveston wear dark suits, while the leather-clad thugs similarly embody a sado-masochistic 'rough trade' fantasy. If Gaveston, and Edward as his accomplice, are being celebrated as glamorous hoods, it is all the more difficult to accept them later as heroes and martyrs. These quintessentially Jarmanesque images add up to a contradictory surfeit of meaning that the text cannot accommodate.

This approach entails particular problems for the treatment of Isabella. Envisaged, according to Tilda Swinton, as a composite of Margaret Thatcher, Grace Kelly, Ivana Trump and others, Isabella's nature is largely contingent on the image and wardrobe she adopts for each appearance. Until her central soliloquy – a long static shot – she is the wronged, wounded wife, but once she decides to rebel, she is caricatured more forcefully as a political monster.

In fact, it is when she becomes sexually active with Mortimer that she becomes truly monstrous, a pompous Evita-like demagogue behind a microphone. Finally, in an image that nothing in the film quite prepares for, she becomes a vampire, killing Kent by sucking at his jugular. This moment of misogynistic horror is in fact part of a more general heterophobia. Indeed, making a heterophobic film to counter an entire history of homophobic ones seems a fair polemical strategy, the logical result of reversing the terms of reference that have often been imposed on Marlowe's play. But to suggest the corruption of the homophobic state, Jarman resorts to a hackneyed image of heterosexual perversity – the sight of Mortimer being whipped by two 'Wild Girls' recalls the spanked judge of *O Lucky Man!* or the accountants in bondage of *Personal Services*, well-worn British cinema shorthand for Establishment hypocrisy.

The stigmatisation of heterosexuality is only effectively resolved in the final image of the prince's triumph, a twist on the Oedipal scene in which he at once becomes his father and appropriates his mother's sexuality. *Edward II* is finally most effective for its elaboration of the 'Jarmanesque' as a style of contradiction, but serves as a reminder that the open-ended structures of *The Garden* or *The Last of England* can accommodate a far greater disparity of meaning than Jarman is able to fit into this more rigid format.

Jonathan Romney

The Fisher King

Certificate
15
Distributor
Columbia Tri-Star
Production Company
Tri-Star Pictures
Producers
Debra Hill
Lynda Obst
Associate Producers
Stacey Sher
Anthony Mark
Production
Pam Cornfeld
Co-ordinator
New York:
Jackie Martin
Unit Production
Manager
Anthony Mark
Location Managers
Bill Bowling
New York:
Mark A. Baker
Additional:
Mark L. Rhodes
Post-production
Supervisor
Sharre Jacoby
Casting
Howard Feuer
New York Extras:
Todd Thaler
Assistant Directors
David McGiffert
Joe Napolitano
Carla Crown
Cynthia A. Potthast
New York:
Cyd Adams
Screenplay
Richard LaGravenese
Director of
Photography
Roger Pratt
Colour
Technicolor
Camera Operator
Craig Haagensen
Optical Visual
Effects
Peerless Camera
Company
Editor
Lesley Walker
Production Designer
Mel Bourne
Art Director
P. Michael Johnston
Set Design
Jason R. Weil
Rick Heinrichs
Set Decorators
Cindy Carr
New York:
Kevin McCarthy
Joseph L. Bird
Scenic Artist
New York:
Michael Zansky
Animal Colorist
Douglas J. White
Special Effects
Consultant
Robert E. McCarthy
Special Effects
Supervisors
Dennis Dion
New York:
Edward Drohan
Special Effects
Dan Sudick
Model Consultants
Bill Cruise & Company
Music
George Fenton
Additional
Orchestrations
Jeff Atmajian
Music Consultant
Ray Cooper
Music Editor
Kevin Lane
Synth Programming
Adrian Thomas
Songs
"How About You"
by Ralph Freed,
Burton Lane,
performed by Harry
Nilsson; "Chill Out
Jack" by Cave Samrai,
Richard Williams,
Peter Harvey, Jonny
Templeton, performed
by Trip; "Hit the Road

Jack" by Percy
Mayfield, performed
by Ray Charles;
"I Wish I Knew" by
Harry Warren, Mack
Gordon, performed
by John Coltrane; "I'm
Sorry" by Ronnie Self,
Dub Allbritten,
performed by Brenda
Lee; "Lydia the
Tattooed Lady" by
E. Y. Harburg, Harold
Arlen; "The Power"
by Benito Benitez,
John Garrett III, Toni
C., Robert Frazier,
Mark James,
performed by Chill
Rob G; "Rose's Turn",
"Some People" by
Stephen Sondheim,
Jule Styne; "You're
Having My Baby"
by Paul Anka
Choreographer
Robin Horness
Costume Design
Beatrix Pasztor
Red Knight:
Keith Greco
Vincent Jeffers
Costume Supervisor
Joie Hutchinson
Costumers
Linda Louise Taylor
New York:
Mary Coleman-
Gierczak
Make-up
Key: Zoltan Elek
New York:
Craig Lyman
Title Design
Chris Allies
Opticals
Peerless Camera
Company
Sound Editors
Peter Pennell
Dialogue:
Alan Paley
Foley Editor
Bob Risk
Sound Recordists
Thomas Causey
New York:
Dennis Maitland II
Music:
Keith Grant
Simon Smart
Gerry O'Riordan
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Paul Carr
Robert Farr
Special Projects
Barry Rosenbush
Production
Assistants
Mark Galley
TR Jones
Travis Keyes
Barbara Lampson
Amy Love
Nicole Miller
Ellie Smith
Michael Viglietta
New York:
Tristan Bourne
Pierre Cailliaud
Todd M. Camhe
Patrick D. Garrison
Maureen Garvey
Kathleen Kelly
Timothy C. Lee
Jason Mark
Carrie Rudolf
John Rybacki
Stunt Co-ordinator
Chris Howell
Stunts
Janet Brady
Greg Brickman
Jophrey Brown
Lloyd Catlett
Gilbert Combs
Pete Corby
Jeff Dashnaw
Andy Dupp
J. B. Getzwiller
Bonnie Hock
Rikke Kesten
Harry Madsen
Bennie Moore
Julie Stone
Horse Trainer
James Zoppe

Cast
Robin Williams
Parry
Jeff Bridges
Jack Lucas
Amanda Plummer
Lydia
Mercedes Ruehl
Anne Napolitano
Michael Jeter
Homeless Cabaret
Singer
Adam Bryant
Paul Lombardi
Radio Engineers
David Pierce
Lou Rosen
Ted Ross
Limo Bum
Lara Harris
Sondra
Warren Olney
TV Anchorman
Frazer Smith
News Reporter
Kathy Najimy
Crazed Video
Customer
Harry Shearer
Sit-com Actor Ben
Starr
Melinda Culea
Sit-com Wife
James Remini
Bum at Hotel
Mark Bowden
Doorman
John Ottavino
Father at Hotel
Brian Michaels
Little Boy
Jayce Bartok
Dan Futterman
Punks
Bradley Gregg
Hippy Bum
William Jay Marshall
Jamaican Bum
William Preston
John the Bum
Al Fann
Superintendent
Stephen
Bridgewater
Porno Customer
John Heffernan
Stockbroker Bum
Chris Howell
Red Knight
Richard
LaGravenese
Straitjacket Yuppie
Anita Dangler
Bag Lady
Mark Bringelson
Drooler
Johnny Paganelli
Pizza Boy
Diane Robin
Receptionist
John Benjamin Red
Motorcyclist
Lisa Blades
Parry's Wife
Christian Clemenson
Edwin
Carlos Carrasco
Doctor
Joe Jamrog
Guard
John de Lancie
TV Executive
Lou Hancock
Nurse
Caroline Cromelin
Kathleen Bridget
Kelly
Patrick Fraley
Radio Show Call-ins

12,375 feet
137 minutes



...for another (Nigel Terry)

USA 1991

Director: Terry Gilliam

● Abrasive New York radio disc jockey Jack Lucas gets his comeuppance when a phone-in caller, Edwin, responds to his baiting by gunning down customers in a yuppie watering-hole. Tortured by guilt, Jack's career disintegrates. Three years later, he is living and working at the Video Spot store, under the loving eye of its owner, Anne Napolitano. While drunkenly contemplating suicide by the Manhattan Bridge, Jack is set upon by two punks. Parry, a derelict and former professor of mediaeval history subject to visions of a menacing Red Knight, rescues him and insists it is Jack's mission to retrieve what he believes is the Holy Grail – a silver cup kept in a bookcase in the Fifth Avenue mansion of billionaire Langdon Carmichael.

Jack dismisses Parry as a madman, but seeks him out again after learning that his wife was among Edwin's victims, and that grief drove him into a mental hospital. He finds Parry in downtown Manhattan, in forlorn pursuit of Lydia, a lonely secretary and the girl of his dreams. Dismissing Jack's offer of money, Parry shows him the billionaire's house, and explains the myth of the Fisher King, who lost the Grail, along with health, faith and love, only to have them restored by a Fool. Hoping to redeem himself, Jack decides to help Parry meet Lydia, and lures her to the Video Spot. Jack, Anne, Parry and Lydia go for a Chinese meal; Parry, ever chivalrous, sees Lydia home, and they enjoy their first kiss. Returning to his hovel, however, he is beaten by punks and lands in hospital.

A rejuvenated Jack plans to get back into the media, but Anne becomes possessive and he leaves her. After spurning an offer to work on a television comedy about the homeless, Jack learns of Parry's plight, and finds him in a catatonic state in a psychiatric ward. Jack determines to rescue the Holy Grail, snatching the cup while the billionaire sits slumped in a chair, dead from a drug overdose. Jack brings the cup to the hospital, where Parry – finally free from the trauma of his wife's death – regains consciousness. Parry is reunited with Lydia; Jack returns to Anne at the video shop. To celebrate victory over their demons, Jack and Parry lie naked in Central Park, singing "I Like New York in June, How About You?"

● Terry Gilliam claims his previous films were the work of a film-maker – defined in this instance as one who initiates the material and guides it on to the screen step by step. *The Fisher King*,



Pixie & Pinocchio: Robin Williams

by contrast, marks his début as a film director: someone who simply visualises another's script. It is perhaps some testament to Gilliam's powerful imagination that audiences will hardly spot the difference. *The Fisher King* marches onwards carrying all the panoply of myth, satire, special effects and narrative fireworks familiar from *Munchausen*, *Time Bandits* and *Brazil*.

At the heart of Richard LaGravenese's script is a curious, small, potentially touching tale of wastrel Jack's redemption at the hands of visionary derelict Parry (playing Fool to Jack's Fisher King): two outcasts from the myths of time conquering late twentieth-century adversity. But Gilliam, encouraged by Tri-Star's generous budget, pumps up the proportions from the outset. He creates an oppressive Manhattan of gaunt stone buildings; he whips up a flurry of Expressionist weather and camera angles, and sends a fire-belching Red Knight galloping on horseback through Parry's disturbed mind on to the screen. Gilliam has come a great distance since he last sought the Grail with his fellow

Pythons: in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1974), scattershot jokes, parody and rigmarole were the only goals. *The Fisher King* has plenty of humour – from Parry's bashful attempts to woo his fair maiden, to the vaudeville turn by Michael Jeter's gay cabaret singer – but this is still a film that takes itself far too seriously.

With the grandiose scale comes an unwieldy narrative, alternately garbled and contrived, cluttered with diversions of dubious effect. When Gilliam pauses to show Grand Central Station commuters exchanging their bustle for rapturous waltz steps – a detail added to LaGravenese's script – he at least displays cinematic élan. Too many other scenes strain for fanciful significance, from the child handing Jack a Pinocchio toy to the naked Parry communing with the skies in Central Park. Even the Grail business itself – complete with turreted mansion, an engraved silver cup, and an intriguing red-herring of a billionaire owner – is clumsily handled and obfuscating.

This is a pity, for when *The Fisher King* narrows its sights and lets the

characters interact unencumbered by myths, the results are promising. As Jack, the blighted disc jockey, Jeff Bridges – a loose strand of hair dangling down his face – creates a convincing portrait of a desolate soul struggling to find a way through his wilderness; though he can do nothing to surmount the abrupt scripting of Jack's break-up with his lover-protector, Anne. As Parry the haunted derelict – a shifting mixture of crackpot, seer, clown and child – Robin Williams draws on all his resources of manic energy, pixie charm and bashfulness.

The best stretch by far concerns Jack's match-making scheme, when the characters slot together in a droll romantic comedy of manners, where each would-be lover proves as clumsy and tongue-tied as the other. (Amanda Plummer is perfect as the gawky secretary, Lydia.) *The Fisher King* had the makings of a sweet, tender, manageable film; but Gilliam – whether as film-maker or director – drowns its potential in indigestible whimsy and mythological hullabaloo.

Geoff Brown

Certificate
12
Distributor
Warner Bros
Production Company
Kennedy Miller
Producers
George Miller
Doug Mitchell
Terry Hayes
Associate Producer/Production Manager
Barbara Gibbs
Unit Manager
Paul Enright
Post-production
Marcus D'Arcy
Casting
Liz Mullinar Casting
UK:
Kathleen Mackie
Extras:
Gabrielle Healy
Assistant Directors
Charles Rotherham
"PJ" Voeten
Emma Schofield
Screenplay
John Duigan
Director of Photography
Geoff Burton
In colour
Opticals
Roger Cowland
Editors
Robert Gibson
Additional:
Marcus D'Arcy
Production Designer
Roger Ford
Art Director
Laurie Faen
Set Directors
Kerrie Brown
Glen Johnson
Scenic Artist
Eric Todd
Music/Songs
"Proserpina" by John Duigan, Sara de Jong, performed by Sydney Youth Orchestra;
"Sleepy Lagoon" by Lawrence, Coates, performed by Harry James; "Wasps" by Vaughan Williams, performed by Queensland Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Patrick Thomas; "Johnny Get Angry" by David, Edwards, performed by Joannie Sommers; "Tutti Frutti" by Penniman, La Bostrie, Lubin; "I Just Wanna Make Love to You" by Willie Dixon; "The Mooche" by Ellington, Mills, performed by Sydney Bechet; "With a Girl Like You" by R. Presley, performed by The Troggs; "Little Egypt" by Leiber, Stoller; "Big Bad John" by Jimmy Dean
Fight Music
James D'Arcy
Music Performed by
Recorder Solo:
Wolfgang Duigan
Music Supervisor
Christine Woodruff
Choreographer
Gill Falson
Costume
Co-ordinators
Fiona Nicolls
Lyn Askew
Make-up Artist
Sherry Hubbard
Titles
Optical and Graphic
Sound Editors
Dialogue:
Antony Gray
Annabelle Sheehan
Margaret Sixel
Noelleen Westcombe
Foley Editors
Steve Burgess
Jerry Long

Sound Recordists
Ross Linton
Phil Judd
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recorder
Angus Robertson
Sound Effects Editors
Nicky Roller
Peter Townend
Boxing Co-ordinators
Guy Norris
Glen Reuhland
Helicopter Pilot
Martin Lee

Cast
Noah Taylor
Danny Embling
Thandie Newton
Thandie Newton
Nicole Kidman
Nicola Radcliffe
Bartholomew Rose
"Gilby" Fryer
Felix Nobis
Jack Blair
Josh Picker
"Backa" Bourke
Kiri Paramore
"Slag" Green
Marc Gray
Christopher Laidlaw
Greg Palmer
Colin Proudfoot
Joshua Marshall
"Cheddar" Feddersen
David Wieland
"Possum" Piper
Craig Black
"Pup" Pierdon
Leslie Hill
Greg Gilmore
Jeff Truman
Morris Cutts
Marshall Napier
Rupert Elliott
John Dicks
Reverend Consti Nicholson
Kym Wilson
Melissa Miles
Naomi Watts
Janet Odgers
Lisa Spinadel
Barbara Howe
Francesca Raft
Fiona Spry
Louise Hannan
Theresa Barclay
Danielle Lyttleton
Jean Thomas
Jacqui Fifer
Stacey Bunt
Fiona Press
Mrs Archer
Maggie Blinco
Guinevere Macready
Jane Harders
Sylvia Anderson
Malcolm Robertson
Bruce Embling
Judi Farr
Sheila Embling
Freddie Paris
Solomon Adjewa
Femi Taylor
Letitia Adjewa
Gillian Hyde
Dr Alison Pierce
Harry Lawrence
Motel Manager
Michael Williams
Sonny Liston
Kurt Frey
Jean-Paul Sartre

8,914 feet
99 minutes

Australia 1989

Director: John Duigan

● Australia, 1965. Seventeen-year-old Danny Embling is unhappy at his boarding-school, St Alban's College, where the other boys taunt him for his stammer and his humble outback origins. He seeks solace in dreaming of the college's sister school, Cirencester, situated across the lake from St Alban's.

Thandiwe Adjewa, daughter of an exiled Ugandan academic, arrives as a pupil at Cirencester. The other girls make racist jokes. Danny and Thandiwe take part in a debate at St Alban's, where they both make subversive speeches. Intrigued by each other, they arrange to meet at the next school dance, but Danny is banned from attending by the sadistic Mr Elliott. The two meet surreptitiously and go to Danny's dormitory to talk, where they narrowly avoid getting caught.

Thandiwe writes to Danny, but her letter is snatched by his fellow pupil, Bourke, who reads it out loud. Thinking Danny has shown the letter around, Thandiwe snubs him when they meet at a rehearsal of the schools' play. Danny attacks Bourke, who - as St Alban's champion boxer - challenges him to a boxing match. Thandiwe learns the truth about the letter from Cirencester's head girl, Nicola Radcliffe. Danny rows across at night to see her, and she asks him not to fight. But he goes ahead, and is badly beaten.

Danny's parents attend the play, as do Thandiwe's father and step-mother. Afterwards, Danny and Thandiwe fix an assignation, where they touch each other but don't make love. Thandiwe hears that her father, who has returned to Uganda, has been arrested. She decides to follow him, but arranges to spend her last night in a motel with Danny. Discovering this, the staff of both schools track the pair down and find them in bed together. Expelled, Danny goes home to work in his parents' hotel. News comes intermittently from Thandiwe, then ceases. At last a letter arrives: her father and step-mother are dead, but she and her siblings have escaped to Kenya.

● In *The Year My Voice Broke*, John Duigan took what looked like fairly hackneyed rites-of-passage material - teenage rebellion, adult repression, yearning and adolescent lust - and, thanks to a quirky script and well-observed performances, made something fresh and engaging of it. *Flirting*, a sequel with the same hero, Danny Embling, doesn't quite pull off the same trick, bogging down eventually in its own romantic wish-fulfilment, but there's a lot of enjoyment to be had along the way.

The school itself, the usual repellent mix of snobbery, bullying and the smell of overboiled cabbage, is vividly evoked, and Danny's voice-over shrewdly pinpoints its worst feature: "Twenty-four hours a day you're surrounded". Trapped in enemy territory, he retreats into a fantasy and the novels of Sartre, dreaming at night of the idyllic feminine world across the lake. Duigan duly sends his camera soaring over the water to a lush Vaughan Williams melody, only to defuse the idyll as Thandiwe encounters her fellow pupils. Cirencester may be less overtly violent than St Alban's, but it's just as poisonous.

As in Duigan's earlier film, the narrow parochialisms of time and place that oppress the outsider are neatly caught, and provide much of the wry humour. Danny, bending over to be beaten, finds himself gazing at a book entitled *The Great Australian Loneliness*, and a young debater solemnly calls up a supportive list of 'great thinkers': "Aristotle, Kant, the Duke of Edinburgh, Sir Robert Menzies....". At one point during a hopelessly one-sided boxing match, Sartre himself shows up in a ringside seat, offering a consolatory cigarette. Later, as Danny heads off for his first romantic assignation, his equally virginal friend Gilbert gives sage advice: "One thing - remember her needs as well as yours".

But halfway through, as the mechanics of the plot take over, things get too easy. Danny's status in the school shifts from pariah to unofficial hero, and previously unsympathetic characters turn up trumps - not only the bullying Bourke, but the snobby head girl, Nicola Radcliffe (a rather oddly cast Nicole Kidman in a long blonde wig). This could all be taken as an index of Danny's growing self-confidence, but at times it seems more like a heterosexual Aussie update of *The Fifth Form at St Dominics*. Still, if the situations sometimes verge on the banal - the boxing match, the confrontation between parents, the snatched night of forbidden love - Duigan retains enough of his astringent, idiosyncratic tone to make them watchable.

Philip Kemp



Trapped: Noah Taylor, Thandie Newton

Certificate
15
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Orion
Executive Producers
Lee R. Mayes
Bryan Brown
Producers
Jack Wiener
Dodi Fayed
Production Supervisor
Rome: Piero Amati
Production Co-ordinators
Regina Robb
Toni Blay
Los Angeles: Luba Dmytryk
New York: Debra Tanklow
Rome: Verena Baldero
Production Managers
Janet E. Cuddy
New York: G. MacBrown
Unit Production Manager
Los Angeles: Lee R. Mayes
Location Managers
Debra Beers
Joseph Boccia
Los Angeles: Joe Madalena
Rome: Andrea Borella
Location Supervisor
New York: Andrew D. Cooke
Post-production Supervisor
C. Cory M. McCrum
2nd Unit Directors
Vic Armstrong
Andrew London
Gary Charles Davis
Eric Allard
Casting
Lauren Lloyd
Gail Levin
Toronto: Deirdre Bowen
Extras: Scott Mansfield
Los Angeles: Linda Phillips Palo
Assistant Directors
Brian Cook
Carl Goldstein
Tom Quinn
Randi Richmond
Ron Oxley
Los Angeles: Steve Dunn
Carol Bonnefil
2nd Unit: Scott Senechal
New York: Glen Trotiner
Rome: Tony Brandt
Screenplay
Bill Condon
Based on characters created by Robert T. Megginson, Gregory Freeman
Directors of Photography
Victor J. Kemper
Los Angeles: David M. Walsh
Los Angeles 2nd Unit: Robert Odessa
Rome: Tonino Delli Colli
Colour
DeLuxe
2nd Unit Directors of Photography
Bob Saad
Paul van der Linden
Aerial Photography
Don Sweeney
Camera Operators
Andy Chumra
Los Angeles: Michael Nash
Robert D. McBride
New York: Don Sweeney
Rome:

Marco Sperduti
Steadcam Operator
Bob Crone
Video
David Woods
Editors
Andrew London
Additional: Michael Tronick
Associate Editors
Christy Richmond
Robin Russell
Production Designer
John Jay Moore
Art Directors
Gregory P. Keen
Los Angeles: James Allen
Set Decorators
Gordon Sim
Los Angeles: Guy Barnes
Set Dressers
Los Angeles: Doug Maxwell
Rome: Ron Woods
Matt Furginson
Scenic Artists
Tim Murton
New York: Linda Covello
Storyboard Artists
James Craig
Michael Jackson
Special Effects
All Effects Company
Supervisor: Eric Allard
Foreman: Joan Mertz
Creature Effects Foreman: Jeff Kennemore
Designer: Chris Ross
Canadian Co-ordinator: Neill N. Trifunovich
Location Crew: Phil Bartko
Bruce Khetian
Scott Forbes
Paul Russell
Cyborg and Prop Technicians: Tony Allard
Larry Bowman
Mike Cobos
Ralph Cobos
Gunnar Ferdinandsen
Ed French
Eryn Krueger
Joe Podnar
Joe Reader
Dwight Roberts
Mark Yuricich
Stuart Ziff
Music
Lalo Schiffrin
Music Co-ordinator
Frank Capp
Music Editor
Katherine Quittner
Song
"Bluey" performed by Cynthia Quinn, Karl Bauman
Choreographer
Moses Pendleton
Costume Design
Linda Matheson
Wardrobe
Erla Lank
Los Angeles: Supervisor Florence Kemper
Joseph Roveto
F/X: Cliff Cassidy
New York: Women
Arlene Coffey
Men
Jim Roberts
Make-up
Key: Linda Gill
F/X: Ken Diaz Stratton
Edward French
Greg Nelson
New York: Bob Laden
Rome: Roberto Petrini

Special Make-up Effects
Cyborg: Rick Stratton
Title Design
Saxon/Ross Film Design
Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title
Sound Design
Gary Rydstrom
Supervising Sound Editors
Ronald A. Jacobs
Jeff Watts
Sound Editors
Teresa Eckton
Ken Fischer
Hael Kobayashi
Mary Helen Leasman
Paige Sartorius
Michael Silvers
Marshall Winn
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Bruce Carwardine
Gary Rydstrom
Tom Johnson
Gary Summers
Los Angeles: Claude Riggins
New York: Steve Scanlon
Rome: Amelio Verona
Music: Peter J. Granet
Foley
Artists: Joan Rowe
Gregg Barbanell
Recordist: Scott Chandler
ADR Voices
Doris Hess
Barbara Iley
Judi Durand
Joanna Lipari
Jane Alden
Lang Yun
David McCharen
J. D. Hall
Javier Grajeda
Daamen J. Krall
Holly Ryan
Vernon Scott
Greg Finley
Steve Susskind
Joseph Chapman
Jan Rabson
Peter Chan
Art Expert
Corey Keebles
Technical Consultants
Paul Glanzman
Steve Dunne
Tony Kono
Joe Lisi
Production Assistants
Richard Shea
Justin Soliday
Eric Vogel
Maureen McKean
John Davis
Los Angeles: Wendy Ozols
Rome: David Ambrosia
Stunt Co-ordinators
Gary Charles Davis
Canada: Ted Hanlan
Los Angeles: Ed Ulrich
Stunts
Brenda Adams
Lloyd Adams
Marcel Berube
Marco Bianco
Don Hewitt
David Gonzales
Anton Tykodi
Ken Quinn
Stunt Doubles
Bryan Brown:
Ted Hanlan
Brian Dennehy
Chuck Hicks
Cyborg: Eric Cord
Wino Ed Anders
Helicopter Pilot
Paul Winiecki

Cast
Bryan Brown
Rollie Tyler
Brian Dennehy
Leo McCarthy
Rachel Ticotin
Kim Brandon
Joanna Gleason
Liz Kennedy
Philip Bosco
Ray Silak
Kevin J. O'Connor
Matt Neely
Tom Mason
Mike Brandon
Dominic Zamprogna
Chris Brandon
Josie DeGuzman
Velez
John Walsh
Rado
Peter Boretski
Carl Becker
Lisa Fallon
Kylie
Lee Broker
DeMarco
Philip Akin
Detective McQuay
Tony de Santis
Detective Santoni
Ross Petty
Consigliere
Dee McCafferty
Chamblis
Jeri Craden
Aunt Kate
Karie Stone
Beth
Phil Jarrett
Richard Sali
IAD Cops
James Stacy
Cyborg
Neil Elliot
Movie F/X Man
Leland Crooke
Movie Director
Biff Yeager
Police Sergeant
Foster Fell
Policeman
Jack Orend
Wino
Jennifer Chatfield
Movie Scriptgirl
Kurt Reis
Judge
Damir Andrei
Defence Attorney
Charles Ivey
Defendant
Caroline Yeager
Desk Sergeant
Arlene Duncan
Hooker
Robert Kennedy
Computer Store Clerk
Dwayne McLean
Mall Guard
Gerry Quigley
Supermarket Manager
Harvey Chao
Chinese Vendor
Harry Booker
Prison Priest
Bob Clout
Confessional Priest
Jack Newman
Art Expert
Walker Boone
Michael Rhoades
Gene Mack
Mansion Guards
Shane Cardwell
Michael Woods
Matt Birman
Mobsters
Tony Katsaras
Dennis Scott
Policemen

9,703 feet
108 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Richard Franklin

Ex-movie special-effects man Rollie Tyler now designs hi-tech toys and lives in New York with his girlfriend Kim Brandon and her young son Chris. His latest creation is a telemetric clown robot, "Bluey", which mimics the wearer of a specially designed blue suit. Asked by Kim's ex-husband, Mike, a cop, to help catch a killer, Rollie agrees, although haunted by the death of his girlfriend during a similar case some years earlier. Rollie helps lure the killer into a confrontation (which he videotapes), but the plan backfires and both Mike and their quarry are killed.

Sensing a set-up, and suspicious of Mike's superior, Ray Silak, Rollie calls in his old friend Leo McCarthy, an ex-cop turned private detective. Rollie is attacked by a knifeman while watching his videotape of the murder (which shows a second man killing Mike), but Leo scares him off. Through an old flame, Velez, in the police records department, Leo connects a case Mike was working on with police informant Matt Neely. The latter is now in prison on a minor charge, where Leo visits him to find him feigning religious interest in order to get close to the devout Carl Becker, a veteran criminal dying of emphysema who is alleged to have stolen ten priceless Michaelangelo gold medallions.

Rollie connects Becker's name with a file on Chris' computer discs (which he has taken from Mike's apartment), and tells the boy to send the information to Velez by computer modem. Halfway through, a guman grabs Chris and then his mother, but Rollie intervenes and captures the hit man. Meanwhile, Velez is shot dead in a Mafia-style attack, and Leo and Assistant DA Liz Kennedy set up a raid on a Mafia safe house. Released

from prison and accompanied by Ray Silak, Neely uses information supplied by Becker during his dying confession to retrieve the medallions from a church confession box.

Leo and Rollie approach the safe house from opposite sides. The police back-up Liz has promised is not in evidence, and Leo gives her a gun. Inside the house they confront the Mafia boss, who says (apparently truthfully) that they intended to return the medallions to the Vatican. Also there are Neely and Ray Silak, who turns out to be in league with the corrupt Liz Kennedy. Rollie sets off some explosions; Liz shoots Leo, Silak shoots Neely and then attempts to escape with the medallions in a helicopter being flown by Bluey. Rollie and Leo (who was shot with blanks from his own gun) give chase by motorboat. Controlled by Rollie, Bluey jumps with the medallions, which promptly sink. Rollie, however, has swapped them for fake ones. Later, he and Leo visit the Vatican, leaving the real medallions on the collection plate.

"Bluey", the robot clown which mimics the movements of a human being in a specially designed body suit, is a perfect metaphor for this lazy sequel, which duplicates almost exactly the twists and turns of the original. The first third of the film is taken up with an obviously fake pre-credits sequence involving a rampaging alien and a recalcitrant exploding car, getting Rollie Tyler and his old pal Leo McCarthy out of retirement, and contriving a set-up which will provide a suitable showcase for Rollie's special-effects wizardry. Bryan Brown and Brian Dennehy work well together, but as with the first film, the need to have Rollie and Leo approach the case from opposite ends frustrates even this chemistry.

Nigel Floyd



Chemistry failure: Bryan Brown, Brian Dennehy

Get Back

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Entertainment
Production Companies
Allied Filmmakers/
Front Page Films
In association with
MPL
Executive Producer
Jake Eberts
Producers
Henry Thomas
Philip Knatchbull
Associate Producer
Dusty Symonds
Production Supervisor
Fiz Oliver
Production Co-ordinators
Jennie McClean-Cooke
Jeff Kennedy
Linda Beth Hess
Production Manager
Ed Dessiso
2nd Unit Directors
35mm:
Aubrey Powell
16mm:
Charles Stewart
Directors of Photography
Jordan Cronenweth
Robert Paynter
In colour
Editor
John Victor Smith
Associate Editors
Derek Trigg
David Spiers
Steve Purcell
Music Performed by
Paul McCartney
Linda McCartney
Hamish Stuart
Robbie McIntosh
Paul "Wix" Wickens
Chris Whitten
Songs
"Band on the Run",
"Rough Ride", "Put It
There", "This One",
"Coming Up", "Live
and Let Die" by Paul
McCartney; "Got to
Get You into My Life",
"Long and Winding
Road", "The Fool on the Hill", "Sergeant
Pepper", "Goodbye
Sunshine", "I Saw Her
Standing There",
"Eleanor Rigby", "Back
in the USSR", "Can't
Buy Me Love", "Let It
Be", "Hey Jude",
"Yesterday", "Get
Back", "Golden
Slumbers/Carry That
Weight/The End",
"Birthday" by John
Lennon, Paul
McCartney
Title Design
Muscle Films
Titles/Optionals
The Optical
Partnership
Sound Editor
Leslie Hodgson
Sound Re-recorders
Robin O'Donoghue
Peter Henderson
Eddie Klein
Technical Supervisor
Steve Swartz
Researchers
David Peers
John Platt
Production Assistant
Beth Tyler

8,030 feet
89 minutes

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Richard Lester

Richard Lester's film consists of largely unfussy concert footage of Paul McCartney's recent world-wide "Get Back" tour, taking in thirteen countries throughout 1990 and ending in front of 184,368 paying Brazilians in Rio De Janeiro. The director of the Beatles' 60s films *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help*, Lester's job here is a relatively easy one. He casually, if not lazily, intercuts old footage of earlier Beatles concerts and films, horrific Vietnam War material, Martin Luther King, animals in their natural habitat, and other material highlighting the violent social and political aspects of the 60s which always served as a backdrop to the hippy dream.

Split-screen techniques are used to show members of the audience from different countries at their daily jobs. But, by and large, Lester's approach is restrained and if anything somewhat ambiguous in the found-footage sequences. At times, they seem to act as ironic subversions of the politically indifferent songs: it is tempting to imagine that the songs have been set to found-footage edited by a satirist like Bruce Conner (a shot of a bridge swaying in a storm is the same one used by Conner in his classic avant-garde film, *A Movie*). Sadly, of course, it is more likely that they are simply meant as visual counterpoints and clichéd context-setting devices.

Beyond the film's main function to document the McCartney tour, it deals inevitably in nostalgia. The potency of images and sounds from the past is underlined to plunge the viewer into his or her past. Cinema, in other words, is undercut in *Get Back* by the vagaries of cultural and personal histories and memories. Watching McCartney's audience - made up largely of Japanese schoolgirls and middle-class twenty-year-old Brazilians - sing along to songs written when they were either not born or in the cradle, is to witness the staggering success of the Beatles as songwriters and pop phenomenon par excellence.

McCartney and band are excellent and *Get Back* does what one assumes is its primary job, to produce a music video. For audiences in their 40s, it will probably provide a rather moving experience (sixth-form dances, Vietnam demos, flowers in the hair, military jackets, one's first love, first child, etc.). As a film, its only interest is to remind us of the potency of certain images and sounds, and how 'mythological' subject matter can make the director's job a fairly easy one.

Michael O'Pray

Homicide



Matters of faith : Joe Mantegna...

Certificate
15
Distributor
First Independent
Production Company
Bison Films
For Cinehaus
Executive Producer
Ron Rotholz
Producers
Michael Hausman
Edward R. Pressman
Associate Producers
Andy Armstrong
Matthew Carlisle
Production Associate
New York:
Irene Devlin Weiss
Production Co-ordinator
Alison Sherman
Unit Production Manager
Michael Hausman
Location Managers
Kevin J. Foxe
Debra Donaldson
Post-production Supervisors
Cathleen Clarke
Kevin J. Foxe
Assistant Directors
Matthew Carlisle
Karen Collins
Frank Ferro
Screenplay
David Mamet
Director of Photography
Roger Deakins
In colour
Editor
Barbara Tulliver
Production Designer
Michael Merritt
Art Director
Susan Kaufman
Set Decorator
Susan Kaufman
Set Dressers
Howard Marc
Solomon
Liz Weber
On-Set:
Lisa K. Sessions
Storyboard Artist
Jeff Balsmeyer
Special Effects
Kenny Estes
Music
Alaric Jans
Music Editor
Suzana Peric
Costume Design
Nan Cibula
Wardrobe Supervisor
Heidi Shulman
Make-up
Frank Rogers
Title Design
Balsmeyer & Everrett
Opticals
The Effects House
Corporation
Supervising Sound Editor
Maurice Schell

Sound Editors
Richard P. Cirincione
James H. Nau
Bruce Kitzmeyer
ADR Editor
Rose Rosenblatt
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recorder
Richard Portman
Production Consultant
Nancy Hackerman
Production Assistants
Art Department:
Mark Oliver
Office:
Michelle Strong
LA:
Mark Pressman
William Towne
Christopher Otto
Ann Greene
Stunt Co-ordinator
Andy Armstrong
Stunt Doubles
Ving Rhames:
Chuck Jeffries
Colin Stinton
Sean Kelly
Joe Mantegna:
George Aguilar
Cast
Joe Mantegna
Bob Gold
William H. Macy
Tim Sullivan
Natalija Nogulich
Chava
Ving Rhames
Randolph
Vincent Guastaferrro
Lieutenant Senna
Rebecca Pidgeon
Ms Klein
J. J. Johnston
Jilly Curran
Jack Wallace
Frank
Lionel Mark Smith
Charlie Olcott
Adolph Mall
Benjamin
Paul Butler
Commissioner Walker
Colin Stinton
Walter B. Wells
Roberta Custer
Cathy Bates
Charles Stransky
Doug Brown
Bernard Gray
James
Louis Murray
Mr Patterson
Chris Kaldor
Desk Sergeant
Linda Kimbrough
Sergeant Green
Robin Spielberg
Records Officer
Yuri Alexis
Reporter
Darrell Taylor
Willie Sims
Jonathan Ridgeley
Deliveryman

Willo Hausman
Juvenile Officer
Leo Burns
Officer Arraigning
Wells
Ron Butler
Rookie
Lee Cohn
Officer Escorting
Ms Klein
George Harvey
Officer Transporting
Wells
Charles Chessler
Plainclothes Officer
Jordan Lage
FBI Team Leader
George Rogers
Steve Anderson
Elmer Aulton
Anthony Boer
Michael Hammond
Guy Johnson
SWAT Team
Erica Gimpel
Woman with
Randolph
Tony Mamet
Officer Farro
Larry Kopp
Officer Threatened
by Dog
J. S. Bloch
Dr Klein
Bob Moore
Police Captain
Keith Johnson
Captain's Driver
Alan Souie
Crime Scene
Technician
Sandy Waters
Neighbourhood
Woman
Cliff McMullen
Night Officer at
Variety Store
Purnell McFadden
Wesly Nelson
Kids
Mary Jefferson
Randolph's Mother
Jonathan Katz
Undertaker
Marge Kotlisky
Mrs Klein
Jim Frangione
Police Officer
Ricky Jay
Aaron
Len Hodera
Kali
Robert Bella
Bodyguard
Gail Silver
Lily, the Kleins' Maid
Scott Zigler
Passport Clerk
Jerrold Graff
Rick Washburn
Officers in Elevator
Jim Grace
Paul Hjelmervik
BASF Agents
James Potter
Shoemaker
Steven Goldstein
Librarian
Charlotte Potok
Assistant Librarian
Andrew Potok
Library Technician
Lynn T. Weisberg
Woman in Library
Emily Weisberg
Young Girl in Library
Alan Polonsky
Scholar
Théo Cohan
Young Woman with
Dog
Neil Pepe
Young Man with Dog
Ted Monte
Bodyguard with Gun
Bernard Mamet
Marv
Lou Kaitz
Leo
G. Roy Levin
Barry
Adam Bitterman
Young Bodyguard
John Pritchett
Radio Voice

9,148 feet
102 minutes

USA 1991

Director: David Mamet

During an FBI raid on his Baltimore hideout, black drug dealer Randolph escapes, and Commissioner Walker angrily orders the city's best cops to succeed where the FBI has failed. Bobby Gold and his partner Tim Sullivan set out to pick up Willie Sims, Randolph's brother-in-law, but en route they come on the scene of a candy-store shooting. Sending Sullivan ahead, Gold assumes responsibility until reinforcements can take over; he finds that the shopkeeper, shot in the back, was an elderly Jewish lady. Onlookers claim that she was known to have a fortune hidden in her cellar, but when two of her relatives arrive, Dr Klein and his daughter, they comment bitterly that this is an anti-Semitic murder.

Impatient to get on to the Randolph assignment, Gold is furious when the next arrival, a police captain, puts him in charge of the case; and the Kleins later insist that Gold's presence is vital, since he too is Jewish. Sullivan brings in Sims, who duly reveals Randolph's address. Temporarily abandoning the Kleins, Gold slips away to help collect Randolph, but finds the drug dealer's mother instead; he persuades her to save her son's life by helping the police to trap him, but she will do this only if Gold supervises the arrest.

The Kleins summon Gold to their home, claiming there is a gunman on the adjacent roof; investigating, Gold finds a scrap of paper bearing the word 'GROFAZ'. Returning to the candy store, he finds evidence in the cellar that long ago Mrs Klein bought some machine-guns, and there is a list of people to whom they have been supplied. Noticing anti-Semitic posters in the area, Gold begins to take more seriously the Kleins' fears of a conspiracy. Researching the 'GROFAZ' clue, Gold learns that it was an obscure war-time reference to Hitler; he also discovers the address of a group of Jewish activists, who make him welcome until he refuses to give them Mrs Klein's original list of names, now logged as evidence.

He begs one of them, Chava, to let him help her destroy an anti-Semitic printing centre, but the activists photograph him as he sets off the explosion, and demand the list of names in exchange for the potentially incriminating photos. Suddenly remembering his Randolph rendezvous, Gold arrives too late: a gun battle has broken out, and Sullivan has been fatally shot. Heedless of his own safety, Gold confronts Randolph, who shoots him too before being picked off by a police marksman. After hospitalisation, Gold limps back

to his office and is told that he is no longer part of the Homicide Division, that Mrs Klein was killed by two black kids for her supposed hoard of cash, and that a brand of pigeon food is called 'GROFAZ'.

As the camera retreats from the empty face of Bobby Gold at the end of *Homicide*, his state of isolation is complete. The three films Mamet has written and directed so far have each concerned a similar individual, starkly unattached and uncommitted, apparently devoid of private life, who serves a catalytic function in events planned and manipulated by others. In *House of Games*, the victim of an elaborate hoax achieves revenge by putting into practice the tricks she has learned; in *Things Change*, the bewildered central player in an obscure Mafia project enjoys some brief glory and manages to retreat unhurt. But with this third spin of the wheel, the Jewish cop in *Homicide*, who is relied upon by everybody, loses his stake entirely; bereft of confidence, compensation, friends, allies, purpose and self-respect, he is discarded as a cypher (Mamet has allowed him no home, no family ties, not even a place to sleep at nights) that has been damaged beyond repair.

The particular fascination of *Homicide*, which offers itself only by the slightest of hints as another game of writer's bluff, is that Bobby Gold's suspicions of a conspiracy linking the murder of a Jewish shopkeeper, the possible harassment of a wealthy family, and the whereabouts of a consignment of machine-guns, are substantiated by a cunningly evasive script. The victim's relatives, the Klein family, are in no doubt that she was killed by the United Action Front, the neo-

fascist group which, as Gold discovers for himself behind a demure model-railway shopfront, promotes an obscene and violent anti-Semitism. The Kleins fear that further attacks are planned against them and, sure enough, Gold hears what could be a gunshot, and glimpses an intruder on the roof.

Only later, when a different explanation for the murder slips casually past us, does the conspiracy theory begin to quiver and slide like a house of cards. That Dr Klein's mother was murdered for her gun-running activities some forty years earlier seems less likely than that the rumour of a fortune in her cellar was finally tested by local youths. The circumstances, however, are heated and emotional. Gold, having made no secret of wanting to continue with his other case, is shamed at being caught out in his disregard (and sublimated envy) for the Kleins by the daughter who overhears his phone call.

In order to avert and neutralise her contempt, he adopts the same eager-to-please approach as for the other two women he insists on 'helping' in the film – the mother who will only betray her son on the assurance that Gold will protect him, and the alluringly exotic terrorist, Chava, who allows Gold to accompany her on a bombing mission. It's his willingness to become part of a family unit, any family unit, that makes Gold so vulnerable to the questions that are aimed at him like missiles – "What are you?"; "Where do you belong?".

Recalling *House of Games*, one is briefly tempted to translate the whole United Action Front scenario into a hoax (the poisonous anti-Semitic room constructed and burned by the activists themselves as part of the plot) designed to

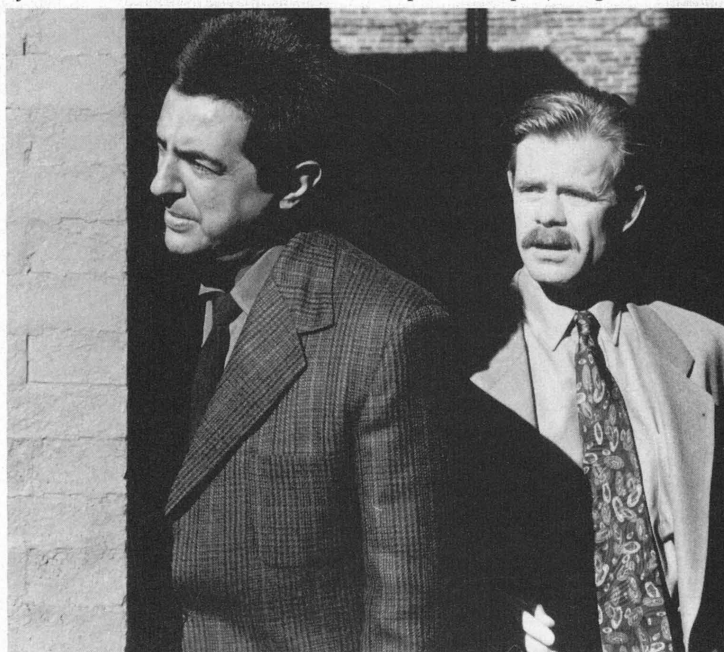
extract a list of unlicensed gunholders from police files. Except that the endless feuding of small teams and factions seems to be the preferred context for Mamet's dramas. A warning can certainly be deduced from the 'GROFAZ' clue (pigeon food or another name for Hitler?) and from the scene of Gold's visit to a library where a Jewish scholar evolves a wild muddle of interpretations from the five-pointed police badge (symbol of the senses, the elements, the fingers, and other pentagrammatic phenomena) that the quest for meaning, while not entirely futile, can often prove no more than a time-wasting diversion in Mamet's opinion.

The pathos of the Jewish cop's predicament, diversions aside, is that his Jewishness is less important to him than the Homicide Division which represents, along with his partner, all the family he knows. Ironically, in the subsidiary detail of the prisoner who has killed off his own family and promises to reveal "the nature of evil" to Bobby Gold, Mamet provides sinister reinforcement to the cop's accumulation of betrayals leading to the death of his partner and the assertion of his own worthlessness. The film's purpose might be to equate this despairing collapse with Gold's lack of faith were it not that no convincing case is made for Semitic honour and stability as distinct from any other kind, either here or in Mamet's other films.

It has all been portrayed with a spellbinding skill and precision, the pace of an action-thriller off-set by unexpected patterns of colour and speech, part documentary, part theatrical melodrama. The opening shot, an abstract diagonal of yellow and brown that becomes, in a shock of recognition, an FBI raid up the staircase of an apartment building, prompts Mamet into a series of equivalent geometrics, a yellow/brown confrontation heralding each of the sieges in the story, even to the clothing of Bobby Gold (one notes the hue of many Mamet names) in the same shades.

Mamet's regular players, their performances the more striking as the faces become familiar (William Macy, Natalija Nogulich, Ricky Jay, and J. J. Johnston ring some remarkable changes on their previous work with Mamet), weave around Roger Deakins' camera in a spectacular fluency or pose strikingly on the chessboard streets that seem, whatever the location, to be the same Mamet city. Their words flow in a mannered, artificial rhythm which – whether tackling a feral guard dog, a gunman at bay, or a dying detective – achieves a triumphant accuracy of mood and motivation.

Philip Strick



...and family: Joe Mantegna, William H. Macy

Mannequin on the Move

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Rank
Production Company
Gladden Entertainment
Executive Producer
John Foreman
Producer
Edward Rugoff
Co-producer
Malcolm R. Harding
Associate Producer
Kate Bales
Production Co-ordinator
Beth Hickman
Production Manager
Daniel Schneider
Location Manager
Samuel P. Tedesco
Post-production Supervisor
Norm Wallerstein
Casting
Philadelphia: Diane Kirman
NY: Deborah Brown
Assistant Directors
Roger La Page
Bruce Greenfield
Betsy Schrott
Steven Kossover
Screenplay
Edward Rugoff
David Isaacs
Ken Levine
Betty Israel
Based on characters created by Edward Rugoff, Michael Gottlieb
Director of Photography
Larry Pizer
In colour
Camera Operators
Sean Doyle
John Sosenko
Special Visual Effects
Max W Anderson
Cinemotion Pictures
Optical Supervisor
Pat O'Neill
Matte Artists
Illusion Arts
Syd Dutton
Bill Taylor
Animation
Chris Casady
Editor
Joan Chapman
Art Director
Norman B. Dodge Jr
Set Decorator
Scott Jacobson
Key Set Dresser
John Mills
Scenic Artists
Head: Genessa Goldsmith
Proctor
Lead: Susan Inge Wood
Mannequins Sculpted by
Tanya Wolf Ragir
Special Effects Co-ordinator
Joey Di Gaetano
Special Effects
Special Effects Unlimited
Music
David McHugh
Music Supervisors
Harlan Goodman
Ken Kushnick
David Passick
Supervising Music Editor
George A. Martin
Songs
"Can't Believe My Eyes" by John Bettis, Jon Lind, "Do It for Love", "Wake Up" by John Van Tongeren, Phil Galdston, performed by Gene Miller; "Pick Up the Pieces to My Heart" by Cindy Valentine, Tony Green, performed by Cindy

Valentine; "Casa De Coati" by Coati Mundi, performed by Meshach Taylor, Coati Mundi; "Feel the Way That I Do" by John Murphy, performed by Shoes; "The Sea Hawk" by Eric Wolfgang Korngold; "That Love Thang" by Richard Szeluga, David Kendrick, performed by E.I.E.I.O.; "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" by Albert Hammond, Diane Warren, performed by Starship
Choreographer
Lori Eastside
Costume Design
Ernest Misko
Wardrobe Supervisor
Sharon Pinkenson
Key Make-up Artist
David Craig Forrest
Sound Editorial Supervisor
Barry A. Synder
Supervising Sound Editors
Teri E. Dorman
Kimberly A. Harris
Sound Editors
Joseph R. Ippolito
Karen Spangenberg
Gary Wright
ADR Editors
Jerelyn J. Harding
Denise Horta
Sound Recordists
Glenn Berkovitz
Mortez Rezvani
Thomas Brandau
Lawrence Hoff
Foley Recordist
Robert Perissi
ADR Recordist
Jeff Gomillion
Sound Re-recordists
Jay M. Harding
John J. Stephens
Dan Hilland
Foley Artists
Keith Olson
Robert Friedman
Production Assistants
Nathan Harding
Sean McCarron
Tom Varga
Jeff Parmele
Molly Readinger
J. David Largever
Stunt Co-ordinator
Gary Jensen
Stunts
Gary Jensen
Christine Baur
Gene Hartline
John Casino
Lincoln Simonds
Gregg Smrz
Mark DeAllesandro
Dana Bertolette
George Colucci
Kim Koscki
Michael Lerner
Jim Lewis Jr
Billy Bates
John Gillespie
Dennis "Danger" Madalone
Charles Courtney
Ben McCrea
Byron Quisenberry
Don Picard
Harry Madsen
Don Hewitt
Animal Wrangler
Jimmy Sherwood
Cast
Kristy Swanson
Jessie
William Ragsdale
Jason Williamson/
Prince William
Meshach Taylor
Hollywood Montrose/
Doorman
Terry Kiser
Count Spretzle/
Sorcerer

Stuart Pankin
Mr James
Cynthia Harris
Mom/Queen
Andrew Hill
Newman
Andy Ackerman
Julie Foreman
Gail
John Edmondson
Rolf/Soldier
Phil Latella
Egon/Soldier
Mark Gray
Arnold/Soldier
Erick Weiss
Jackye Roberts
Mr James' Assistants
John Casino
Horned Soldier
Laurie Wing
Old Queen
Julie Warder
Beauty Technician
G. James Reed
Furniture Salesman
Joanne Bradley
Christine Baur
Garbage Women
Allelon Ruggiero
Employee
Heather Henderson
Lipstick Girl
Sherry Wallen
Dress Saleswoman
Thom Christopher
Warren
Albert
Wendy Worthington
Tour Guide
Jim Mital
Grip
Ilene Morris
Younger Female Guest
Hazel Pierce
Customer
Robert N. Hines
Hauptmann-Koenig
Pilot
Daphne Lynn Stacey
Café Waitress
Eva Andell
Jessie's Sister
Michael J. Anderson
Jewelbox Bearer
Suzanne
DeLaurentis
Night-club Waitress
Dana Dewes
Celeste Russi
Southside Girls
Chris Giannini
Cool Guy
Coco
Lead Dancer
Ellen Sabino
Girl Outside Club
Christine Vanacore
Happy Girl
Michael Stermel
Jerry Lyden
John Richman
Rocky Cathcart
Cops
Joe Milazzo
Cop on Bridge
Matt Myers
Officer Al
Bud Seese
Duty Sergeant
Cliff McMullen
Mannequin Cop
Nancy Nicholson
Girl on Video
Dana Edward
Schmidt
Go-Cart Flagman
Erina Valencia
Felise Bagley
Irene Schoener
Christa Catanoso
Bev Brown
Jennifer McDonough
Luis Torres
Jody Ellis
José Rodriguez
Kerry L. Lacy
Billy Angell
David Ogden
Cynthia Savage
Kim McKee
Dancers
8,542 feet
95 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Stewart Raffill

Jason Williamson takes a job at the Prince & Co department store, working with the head of visual display, Hollywood Montrose, on an exhibition based on the national treasure of Hauptmann-Koenig. Jason is startled when the centrepiece of the show, the legendary figurine of the beautiful peasant girl Jessie, who was turned to stone by an ancient curse, comes to life and declares her love for him. The two go out together at night, but in the morning Jason is dismayed to find that Jessie has once again turned to stone and he returns her to the store.

Jessie is also attracting the attention of the newly arrived Count Spretzle and his three heavies, Rolf, Egon and Arnold. One thousand years ago, one of the count's descendants was a sorcerer in Hauptmann-Koenig, and he placed a magic necklace on Jessie to keep her from marrying a young prince. The sorcerer's curse was designed to turn Jessie into a statue for a thousand years, or until she met her 'true' love. Now Spretzle has come to claim her for his own. When they stumble across the plot, Jason and Hollywood escape Spretzle's henchmen and hide Jessie in Jason's house. Spretzle has Jason arrested and, replacing the necklace round Jessie's neck, prepares to take the statue back for the opening of the exhibition.

After Jason is rescued from jail by a resourceful Hollywood, the two head for Prince & Co, arriving just in time for the show. Jason is wounded during a fight on stage with the count, who then grabs Jessie and makes for his getaway balloon moored on the roof. Jason manages to clamber aboard, and after a struggle the necklace winds up around Spretzle's neck. The count turns to stone, falls over the side,

and shatters on the road below. As Rolf, Egon and Arnold worry about how to reassemble him, Jason and Jessie are safely reunited.

In the mid-1970s, Jack Nichols, one of the leading voices of the American Men's Liberation movement, prophesied the 'natural extinction' of Barbie Doll-ism. The Barbie-comes-to-life plot of *Mannequin on the Move*, together with the knowledge that the manufacturers of such dolls are now using real-life lookalikes to advertise their product, can be seen as another smack in the eye for that kind of optimism. In the film's accompanying publicity, Kristy Swanson describes how her character Jessie combines "the body of a twenty-year-old with the mind of a toddler", the logic of which - that a woman is most beautiful when blessed with the mind of a child - is never once challenged by the film.

There is no reason why the mannequin/show-room dummy can't be used as an intelligent conceit for the objectification of women (see *The Stepford Wives*), or as a means of highlighting the sheer pleasure to be had in dressing up and re-presenting oneself. But when returned to life after a thousand years, Jessie is remarkably unquestioning and unquestioned, an easy vehicle for the consumerist message (when redecorating Jason's bedroom, she 'naturally' gravitates to the colour pink). The script is egregiously inconsistent (Cynthia Harris' dual roles as Jason's mother and the evil Hauptmann-Koenig queen don't tally), and nearly every joke and set-piece is signalled well in advance. The repeat, over the closing credits, of the Starship song "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" from the original *Mannequin* (1987), might be less a comment on the happy ending than a dismal promise that the makers have more up their sleeve.

Julian Stringer



Not extinct: Meshach Taylor, Kristy Swanson, William Ragsdale



Someone else's story: Glenna Headly, Demi Moore

Certificate

15

Distributor

Columbia Tri-Star

Production Companies

New Visions
Entertainment/Polar
Entertainment
Corporation
In association with
Rufglen Films
For Columbia

Executive Producers

Taylor Hackford
Stuart Benjamin

Producers

John Fiedler
Mark Tarlov

Co-producer

Demi Moore

Line-producer

Joe Caracciolo Jnr

Production Associate

Lori H. Schwartz

Production Office Co-ordinator

Alesandra M. Cuomo

Unit Production Manager

Joe Caracciolo Jnr

Post-production Supervisor

Doreen A. Dixon

2nd Unit Director

Gregg Walker

Casting

Donna Isaacson

John Lyons

Assistant Directors

Robert Girolami

Jane Paul

James W. Raitt

2nd Unit:

J. Alan Hopkins

Screenplay

William Reilly

Claude Kerven

Director of Photography

Elliot Davis

Colour

DeLuxe

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Alec Hirschfeld

Steadicam Operator

Ted Churchill

Video

Rick Whitfield

Lance Wandling

Editor

Tom Walls

Production Designer

Howard Cummings

Art Director

Robert K. Shaw Jnr

Set Decorator

Beth Kushnick

Set Dressers

Guido DeCurtis

Mark Paul Selemmon

Andrew Lassman

Scenic Artist

Suzy Abbott

Music

Mark Isham

Music Performed by

Vocalist:

Cheryl Bentyne

Songs

"Just the Way You

Are" by Billy Joel;

"Kung Fu Fighting"

by Carl Douglas

Costume Design

Hope Hanafin

Wardrobe Supervisors

Timothy J. Alberts

Melissa Stanton

Make-up

Janet Flora

Additional:

Joseph A. Campayno

Bruce Willis:

Scott Eddo

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Supervising Sound Editor

Richard King

Sound Editors

Albert Gasser

Mark Stoelckinger

Foley Editor

Doug Kent

Sound Recordists

Gary Alper

Music:

Steven Krause

Foley/ADR

Recordist

Gary Gagin

Dolby stereo

Supervising Sound Re-recorder

Mark Berger

Sound Re-recorder

E. Larry Oatfield

Foley

Gary "Wrecker"

Hecker

Katherine Rowe

Technical Adviser

Lawrence F. Mullane

Production Assistants

Lisa Rowe

Nina Stern

Anthony Desposito

Robert Albertell

Robert Girolami Jnr

Stunt Co-ordinator

Gregg Walker

Stunts

Norman Douglass

Steve Mack

Phil Nielson

Mike Russo

Rick Seaman

Stunt Doubles

Glenna Headly:

Marguerite Happy

Demi Moore:

Janet Paparozzo

USA 1991

Director: Alan Rudolph

Following the death of James Urbanski – the husband of her best friend Joyce – Cynthia Kellogg is questioned by Detective John Woods and black policewoman Linda Nealon. Cynthia remembers the tension between Joyce and the aggressive, boorish James at their wedding party, and James' brutal behaviour in front of the clients at Joyce's beauty salon, where Cynthia worked. One day, Cynthia intervened to stop Joyce from poisoning James, only to have him make a pass at her.

She recalls how, on the night of his death, she and Joyce went to a funfair, accompanied unexpectedly by a drugged, drunken James. After a quarrel, the three separate, but Cynthia is recalled by a distressed Joyce, who shows her James dead in the back of her van after she accidentally killed him in a struggle. In a panic, the pair decide to ditch his body in a river and deny all knowledge of the incident.

Arriving home covered in blood, Cynthia tells the truth to her salesman husband Arthur who, afraid of scandal, demands they hush everything up. After James' body is discovered, Cynthia agrees to clean up the van, and the two continue to keep their secret. But James' brother is suspicious and takes the matter to the police. An increasingly distraught Cynthia begins to mistrust Joyce, and the two fall out. Arthur becomes aggressively uneasy at Cynthia's involvement in the affair, and he and Cynthia separate after a heated argument.

Joyce threatens to kill Arthur because she suspects him of talking about the killing, but Cynthia doesn't take her seriously. She and her father later return to the house, however, to find Arthur's body being carried out. Although Woods suspects he has not heard the whole story, he allows Cynthia to leave the station as Joyce is brought in for questioning. As she leaves, Cynthia recalls what really happened – she killed James in the van after he made a pass at her, and it was Joyce who helped her keep the murder a secret. She returns to the station to confess.

Joyce's Clip 'n' Dye Beauty Salon might have made a perfect addition to the list of everyday places – diners, night-clubs, trailer parks – that take on a mythical, unreal sheen when Alan Rudolph's characters use them as playgrounds in which to execute elegant manoeuvres around each other. But the credits bear out the suspicion that *Mortal Thoughts* is not 'really' a Rudolph film – the fact that he had no part in the script, the presence of inveterate gloss merchant Taylor Hackford as

executive producer, and Demi Moore's co-producer credit.

In fact, Moore's dominant presence ends up seriously affecting the film's premise. From the start, there is an unresolved imbalance in the fact that Cynthia is the centre of her own narrative, when she seems essentially to be a not-so-innocent bystander in someone else's story. The real action always seems to be happening elsewhere, between the Urbanskis, whose quarrels are almost like an intrusion into her life. The film holds out the promise of some twist to justify her central position, but when it arrives, it is too late and too contrived to redress the balance.

The film is really too lax in its method of deceiving the audience. It is one thing for Cynthia's version of events to prove unreliable, a reminiscence doctored for the benefit of the police. But to have her then replay the correct story entirely in her mind is to introduce a quite different type of narrative in the last stretch. The amended version of events does not fill in misleading gaps in the first but, rather less ingeniously, tells a different story entirely.

This fairly simple skewed structure is all the more disappointing in that Cynthia's – admittedly engrossing – shaggy-dog story is framed to suggest the presence of a critical little bit more than meets the eye. It is that little bit, the telling gap, that Harvey Keitel's detective (a reprise of his Viennese, *ergo* Freudian cop in *Bad Timing*) has his eye on. The interrogation is set up as a psychoanalytic session, and the fact that Cynthia tells her story with only sporadic prompting suggests that she is working through her false construction before she can tell the truth. But the true story never emerges from the false one because it is never properly contained within it – it is simply appended to the first.

If the film manages to be thoroughly engrossing while it still has a plausible story to tell, it is largely thanks to the performances. Glenna Headly in particular makes the most of a knowingly histrionic part – her Garbo-like appearance in scarf and dark glasses, as though playing 'Distraught Woman', gives the film its most convincingly Rudolphian tip into absurdity. The film's thriller format finally feels like an encumbrance on what might have been a considerably more interesting female blue-collar buddy movie about trust and betrayal. That, however, would have had to be a more democratic venture. Moore's calling the shots obliges Rudolph to plant her competent but rather sedate performance in dead centre, flanked by two considerably more vigorous turns.

Jonathan Romney



Return to Hollywood England: Andie MacDowell...

Certificate
15
Distributor
Samuel Goldwyn Company/Winston
Production Companies
Avenue Pictures (Los Angeles)/BBC Films (London)
Executive Producer
Cary Brokaw
Producers
Jon S. Denny
BBC Films:
Alex Gohar
Associate Producer
Richard Turner
Production Executive
Avenue Pictures:
Claudia Lewis
Production Associate
Janet Redman
Production Co-ordinator
Sardinia:
Steve Sawyer
Production Services Manager
Sue Lockerby
Production Managers
Sardinia:
Peter Stenning
Alessandro Maggi
Location Managers
Nick Hawkins
Adam Richards
Casting
Karen Lindsay-Stewart
Polly Hootkins for
Howard Field
Associates
Assistant Directors
Brett Fallis
Jamie Annett
P. J. Simpson
Screenplay
Michael Lindsay-Hogg
Director of Photography
David Watkin
In colour
Camera Operator
John Palmer
Editor
Ruth Foster

Production Designer
Derek Dodd
Music
Tom Bahler
Music Editor
Dan Carlin
Costume Design
Les Lansdown
Wardrobe Supervisor
Donna Nicholls
Make-up
Dorka Nieradzki
Title Design
Liz Friedman
Sound Editors
Graham Lawrence
Dialogue:
Craig Irving
Sound Recordist
John Pritchard
Sound Re-recorder
Keith Marriner
Sound Effects Editor
Colin Minchin
Foley
Julie Ankerson
John Fewell
Production Assistant
Sardinia:
Dan Sawyer
Stand-ins
James Clinton
Jennifer White

Cast
John Malkovich
Jake
Andie MacDowell
Tina
Lolita Davidovich
Joan
Rudi Davies
Jenny
Joss Ackland
Mr Mercer
Bill Paterson
Victor Swayle
Ricci Harnett
Steve
Peter Riegert
Larry
Jack Shepherd
Mr Slaughter
Rosemary Martin
Mrs Doughty
Roger Lloyd Pack
Frankie
Andrew Hawkins
Gordon
Pip Torrens
Art Evaluator
Stephen Churchett
Mr Mundy
Annie Hayes
Housekeeper
Richard Ireson
Night Porter
Barry J. Gordon
Auctioneer
Jeremy Sinden
Jonathan
Ginger Corbett
Melissa
John Crocker
Waiter
Victoria Willing
Lara de Almeida
Liz Daniels
Portuguese Maids
Andy Cavenash
Wayne Bailey
Colin Parker
Stewart Miller
Bryan Coyle
Dillon O'Mahoney
Steve's Friends
Massimo Burlini
Enrico
Mario Nocerino
Italian Father

9,227 feet
103 minutes

USA/United Kingdom 1991

Director: Michael Lindsay-Hogg

● Jake and Tina, an American couple staying at a plush English hotel, find themselves financially embarrassed when Jake's shipping investments are threatened by a dock strike. As his credit cards prematurely expire and his debts accrue, he suggests that Tina bail him out by selling her small Henry Moore sculpture (a bedside companion), or failing that, fake its burglary for the insurance money. Tina is reluctant, however, because the piece was a gift from her estranged husband Larry and still has sentimental value.

With the hotel manager, Mr Mercer, becoming increasingly edgy about Jake's bills, however, the insurance scam begins to look like the couple's only salvation. But chambermaid Jenny, a deaf-mute only reluctantly hired by Mercer to counter accusations of discrimination at the hotel, is struck by the beauty of the statue while cleaning Tina's room, and smuggles it home one day. At first, both Jake and Tina suspect the other of carrying out the planned hoax, while the theft causes considerable embarrassment to Mercer, who assigns hotel detective Victor Swayle to the case in order to keep it 'in house'.

Although Jenny is suspected (Swayle unsuccessfully searches her dilapidated flat), the hotel is unable to trace the statue and even Jake realises that the Moore really is missing. The fuss over the statue arouses the curiosity of Jenny's brother Steve, who attempts unsuccessfully to sell it to his usual fence. Realising Tina's genuine despair at her loss, Jenny returns the statue to the hotel, only to find that Steve is being threatened by the fence (who has seen the insurance company's reward notice for it). Jenny steals the statue back to save her brother, but the insurance loss adjuster follows the trail back to her flat. As a full explanation emerges,

no charges are pressed and the statue is returned to Tina. She in turn offers it to Jake for a successful auction sale which reunites the couple.

● Another in the *Truly, Madly, Deeply* stable of BBC films being released theatrically through the Samuel Goldwyn company, *Object of Beauty* bears all the obvious small-screen hallmarks. It also fails, unlike Anthony Minghella's rather winning film, to make much of its social milieu. This has the feel of a calculated trans-Atlantic project: an anonymous, rather quaint capital (plush hotel with reminders of empire days, antique shops with typically Limey owners) and two imported, rather miscast stars.

Actors like Joss Ackland and Bill Paterson, who would normally lead in a prestigious BBC TV play/film, are here confined to stereotyped quarters (gentlemanly hotel manager determinedly avoiding vulgarities like unpaid bills; smarmy, proletarian underling doing all the dirty work to preserve his boss' stiff upper lip), roles which were dated even in the days when the likes of C. Aubrey Smith and Nigel Bruce were propagating them in Hollywood. As the idly rich couple, disdainfully ignoring the cracks in their relationship, John Malkovich and Andie MacDowell make a curiously anaemic stab at establishing any passion, or sympathy for themselves.

The film needed the sort of deft audacity which enabled the similarly insufferable Nick and Nora Charles (luxury hotel dwellers in the *Thin Man* series) to sell affluence and alcoholism to Depression audiences. But Michael Lindsay-Hogg's prosaic script fails to develop either a delicate comedy of manners or a passably amusing farce. He contents himself with underlining ironies which are too contrived (it takes a deaf-mute to appreciate art), sentimental (love transcends greed for Jake and Tina), or downright unbelievable (insurance loss adjusters behaving compassionately).

Farrah Anwar



...Bill Paterson, John Malkovich

Rambling Rose

Certificate
(not yet issued)
Distributor
Guild
Production Company
Carolco Pictures
Executive Producers
Mario Kassar
Edgar J. Scherick
Producer
Renny Harlin
Production
Co-ordinator
Shell Hecht
Production Manager
Mary E. Kane
Location Manager
Johnny Griffin
Post-production
Supervisor
Michael R. Sloan
Post-production
Co-ordinator
Noori Dehnahi
Casting
Aleta Chappelle
Extras:
Action Casting
Martha Spainhour
Libbey Featherston
Assistant Directors
Randall Badger
Johanna J. Jensen
Screenplay
Calder Willingham
Based on his
own novel
Director of
Photography
Johnny E. Jensen
Colour
DuArt/Deluxe
Prints by Technicolor
Editor
Steven Cohen
Production Designer
John Vallone
Art Director
Christiaan Wagener
Set Decorator
Bob Gould
Set Dressers
Key:
Stewart "Polar Bear"
Shaw
John Brommell
Matthew Fann
Micha Hamilton
James Harper
Marya Delia S. Javier
Tim Johnson
Mark Tuerson
Ted Wachter
Storyboard Artist
John Floyd
Special Effects
Greg Hull
Lorenzo T. Hall
Music
Elmer Bernstein

Additional
Orchestrations
Emily Bernstein
Music Editor
Kathy Durning
Songs
"Dixie" (traditional)
performed by
Louis Armstrong
and the Dukes of
Dixieland; "If I could
Be with You One Hour
Tonight" by Henry
Creamer; Jimmy
Johnson, performed
by Ruth Etting;
"Collegiate Rhythm",
"Blue Moan" by Keith
Nicholls; "Lover's
Serenade" by Alan
Moorhouse; "Sidewalk
Stomp Rag" by
Richard Myhill
Costume Design
Jane Robinson
Wardrobe
Supervisor
Deborah Latham
Set Costumers
Amy Lilley
Barbara Miller
Make-up
Manlio Rocchetti
Rudolph Eavey
Title Design
Saxon/Ross Film
Design
Titles/Opticals
Cinema Research
Corporation
Supervising Sound
Editor
Leslie Shatz
Dialogue/ADR Editor
Patrick Dodd
Sound Recordist
Richard Van Dyke
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Leslie Shatz
David Parker
Michael Semanick
Sound Effects
Editor
E. Jeanne Putnam
Sound Effects
Jennifer Ware
Foley
Margie O'Malley
Jennifer Myers

ADR Performers
Royce D. Applegate
Jack Blessing
Sonny Davis
Edward Edwards
Leigh French
Archie Hahn
Tracy Newman
Ruth Silveira
Production
Assistants
Pennie Ellis
Julie F. Johnson
Doug Richards
Manny Sarris
Sound:
Michael Dhonau
Office:
Casey McCormick
Janalee O'Bagy
Stand-ins
Gelene Krug
Jeffrey Smith

Cast
Laura Dern
Rose
Robert Duvall
Daddy
Diane Ladd
Mother
Lukas Haas
Buddy Hillyer
John Heard
Willcox Hillyer
Kevin Conway
Dr Martinson
Robert Burke
Dave Wilkie
Lisa Jakub
Doll Hillyer
Evan Lockwood
Waski Hillyer
Matt Sutherland
Billy
D. Anthony Pender
Foster
David E.
Scarborough
Horton
Robin Dale
Robertson
Young Salesman
General Fermon
Judd Jnr
Shadrack
Richard K. Olsen
Chief of Police
Michael Mott
Man in Store
James Binns
Minister

10,080 feet
112 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Martha Coolidge

● Glenville, Georgia, 1971. Buddy Hillyer returns to his childhood home to see his father. The visit precipitates memories of his adolescence and in particular of Rose, an innocently provocative young woman who came to work at the house during the Depression.

Rose becomes an object of fascination for Buddy and his younger siblings Doll and Waski. Rose in turn is in awe of the parents – Mother, a kindly and learned woman, and Daddy, an affable type who runs the local hotel. It is gathered that Rose has a 'past' and that the family have saved her from prostitution. Rose develops a crush on Daddy and tries unsuccessfully to seduce him one night while Buddy and Doll secretly watch. Later that night, Rose visits Buddy, who is thrilled to have the object of his crush sharing his bed. Though Rose discourages his advances, she is aroused by his inquisitive fumbblings. The following day, Rose is driven into town where she causes a minor sensation with her décolleté neckline and skimpy skirt. Various men start loitering around the Hillyer homestead. Daddy, however, forbids Rose to have any men visitors.

After Rose is jailed following an incident at a local bar where two men started fighting over her, Daddy wants to sack her, but Mother disagrees. Meanwhile, Rose falls ill with double pneumonia and is taken to hospital. When she recovers, Mother takes her in hand, giving her more modest clothes. Later, however, Daddy catches her in her bedroom with a boy. He attempts to throw her out but she announces that she is pregnant. It transpires that she has an ovarian cyst. The doctor recommends that in addition to the cyst being removed she should have an operation to cure her 'neurotic condition'. Mother takes a stand against this and only the cyst is removed. However, this leaves Rose infertile. She recovers and starts dating a local policeman. Later they marry and she leaves the Hillyer family, much to Buddy's grief.

In a coda, it is revealed that she married five times before finally settling down. Subsequently, the adult Buddy is told by Daddy that Rose has died.

● The fact that Martha Coolidge spent five years trying to get *Rambling Rose* made suggests a strong commitment to the project. But though one might have expected a girls' own story from Coolidge, this is not quite it. The tale belongs rather to Buddy as he recollects his adolescent infatuation. The opening

and closing scenes are cumbersome and unnecessary bookends, apparently clamped on to emphasise whose point of view will dominate. This is, after all, a story written by Calder Willingham, whose *The Graduate* provided an early example of Hollywood's male rites-of-passage movie. Played with a beguiling, though somewhat precocious, adolescent impishness by Lukas Haas, the young Buddy proves to be a scene stealer, given many a sharp line by the gently comical script. It is he who first sets eyes on Rose as she sashays up the Hillyers' garden path, and who is to learn a little more about women at the end.

"Girls don't want sex, they want love", confides Rose: this is the rather quaint message at the heart of the film. The naive Rose struggles to make sense of her nascent sexuality, causing a commotion in the Hillyer family. Clad in wispy little dresses, Laura Dern creates a character that combines a childish gullibility with womanly voluptuousness. Her tender Rose is a Marilyn Monroe *manquée* – a mother never-to-be whose heart would belong to Daddy if only he would take it. She never matures; the fact that it takes five husbands to make her happy is presented as a joke, while her complex desires are reduced to simple platitudes. Dern's presence invites comparison with Joyce Chopra's *Smooth Talk* (adapted from a Joyce Carol Oates story), a more intriguing investigation of a young woman's sexual desire and the forces that police it.

While the film does deal with the sexual double standards of the period, it handles the prickly issues with kid gloves. The potentially harrowing fight against Rose's punitive operation – a radical hysterectomy which is also presumably a clitorrectomy – is too easily championed by the liberal and educated mother against the doctor and Daddy (Robert Duvall as the charming but potentially malevolent paternalist). After the excesses of last year's wild-at-heart matriarch, Diane Ladd's performance as Mother percolates with a genteel eccentricity ready to come to the boil when needed. It is a whimsical characterisation in keeping with the film's generally graceful tone.

But it is rather too graceful, and the stark subject matter seems overdressed. The director and her production team evoke a mellow and gold-tinted past, drenching it in sunshine and an excessive dose of Elmer Bernstein's syrupy score. *Rambling Rose* – as the pink blossoming flower of the opening credits seems to signify – is an example of 'feminine' film-making in which sensitivity is too often traded in for sentimentality.

Lizzie Francke

Blossoming:
Laura Dern





Pieces: Tom Berenger, Greta Scacchi...

Certificate

15

Distributor

Palace

Production Company

Capella Films

In association with

Davis Entertainment

Executive Producers

Larry Sugar

Michel Roy

Producers

Wolfgang Petersen

John Davis

David Korda

Co-producers

Ortwin Freyermuth

Gail Katz

Line-producer

Neal Nordlinger

Production Executive

Davis Entertainment:

Darlene Chan

Production Associates

Capella Films:

Graham Ludlow

Judy Landon

Production Co-ordinator

Laura M. Greenlee

Production Manager

Allen Alsbrook

Location Managers

David Salven Jnr

Gail Stempler

Casting

Jane Jenkins

Janet Hirshenson

Extras:

LA Casting Express

Bob Teitlebaum

2nd Unit Extras:

Nancy Hayes Casting

Assistant Directors

Peter Kohn

Gregory K. Simmons

Vincent Palmo Jnr

2nd Unit:

Josh King

Screenplay

Wolfgang Petersen

Based on the novel *The**Plastic Nightmare* by

Richard Neely

Director of Photography

Laszlo Kovacs

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Bobby Byrne

Camera Operators

Michael Gershman

2nd Unit:

Michael Frediani

Steadicam Operator

J. P. Gabriel Jnr

Special Visual Effects

Illusion Arts Inc

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Editors

Hannes Nikel

Glenn Farr

Production Designer

Gregg Fonseca

Art Director

Bruce Miller

Set Designers

Gae Buckley

Lisette Thomas

Set Decorator

Doree Cooper

On-Set Dresser

J. Grey Smith

Production Illustrator

Doug Leffler

Scenic Artist

Tony Paolone

Special Effects Supervisor

Roy Arbogast

Special Effects

David Blitstein

Randy Cabral

Bill Lee

Eric Meyerhofer

Music

Angelo Badalamenti

Orchestrations

Andy Barrett

Charlie Samek

Angelo Badalamenti

Music Editor

Bill Abbott

Songs

"Love Explosion" by

Angelo Badalamenti,

Danielle Badalamenti,

performed by Roberta

Flack; "Hacienda

Source" by and

performed by Ashley

J Irwin

Costume Design

Erica Edell Phillips

Wardrobe

Supervisor:

Amy Stofsky

Costumer:

Tanea Lednicki

Make-up

Joann Wabisca

Special Make-up Effects

Lance Anderson

Greg Polutanovich

Marlene Stoller

Jean Anderson

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors

David Baldwin

Wylie Stateman

Sound Editors

Chris Hogan

Sukie Fontelieu

Tim Chau

Dialogue:

J. Christopher Jargo

Constance A. Kazmer

Bob Behr

Supervising ADR Editor

Gregg Baxter

Sound Recordists

Keith A. Wester

Denis Blackerby

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

John Reitz

David Campbell

Gregg Rudloff

Foley

Gary "Wrecker"

Hecker

Alicia Stevenson

Plastic Surgery Advisers

George Herbert Bemel

Harry Glassman

Medical Advisers

Lance A. Gentile

D. Frank Benson

F. David Rudnick

Production Assistants

Key:

Becki Cross

Josh Hancock

Jordan Stone

Diego Negrete

Gregory Alpert

Margaret Dillen

Tom Potier

Kim Collins

2nd Unit:

Rolf Olsen

Luke Longin

Peter Moody

Stunt Co-ordinators

Joel Kramer

Walter Scott

2nd Unit:

Max Kleven

Stunts

David Booth

John Cade

Charlie Croughwell

Eddie Dono

Georgia Durante

Donna Evans

Joe Finnegan

Bill Jelliffe

Tom McGraw

John Moio

Daniel Moore

Daniel O'Haco

Chris Palomino

Don Pulford

Ron Rondell Snr

Nick Scoggins

John Clay-Scott

Dane Selznick

Meritt Yohnka

Stand-ins

Gary Linden

Sammy Pasha

Brenda Tempel

Helicopter Pilot

Bobby Zajonc

Cast

Tom Berenger

Dan Merrick

Bob Hoskins

Gus Klein

Greta Scacchi

Judith Merrick

Joanne Whalley-Kilmer

Jenny Scott

Corbin Bernsen

Jeb Scott

Debi A. Monahan

Nancy Mercer

Bert Robario

Rudy Costa

Scott Getlin

Jack Stanton

Kellye Nakahara

Lydia

Dona Hardy

Pet Shop Woman

Frank Caveston

Policeman

Jasmin Gabler

Jeb's Secretary

Charlene Hall

Receptionist

Derek Torsek

Dr Benton

George Herbert Bemel

Plastic Surgeon

Theodore Bikel

Dr Bekus

8,780 feet

98 minutes

USA 1991**Director: Wolfgang Petersen**

San Francisco property developer Dan Merrick and his wife Judith plunge over a cliff in their car; she is thrown clear but he suffers horrific injuries. Dan emerges from a coma to find his face reconstructed by plastic surgeons but his personal memories erased. With the help of his partner, Jeb, Dan returns to work, where they are about to finalise a deal to create a new marina complex. Dan finds photos of his wife making love to another man, and Jeb reveals that while on holiday in Mexico, Judith had an affair with a man called Jack Stanton.

A diary entry leads Dan to pet shop owner-cum-private eye Gus Klein, whom he apparently hired before the accident to watch his wife and who sent him the photos on the night of the crash. Dan hires Klein to find out more about Stanton. After telling Dan that Judith's lover is still around, Jeb's wife Jenny makes advances to him, which he rebuffs. Judith claims Stanton left town just after Christmas, and that she and Dan were planning to sell out to Jeb and start afresh in Mexico. But evidence gathered by Klein suggests that Judith and Stanton planned the crash, and after tapping a phone conversation between his wife and Stanton, Dan follows Judith to an old shipwreck. He learns that the wreck contains toxic chemicals and, due to environmental protests, is delaying the marina development.

Klein and Dan stake out a hotel where Judith and Stanton have planned a meeting; they subsequently give chase to Stanton but he escapes. Judith tells Dan there is no Stanton (she played both roles at the hotel) because Dan shot him in a drunken rage on the night of the accident. She and Dan then dumped the body in the shipwreck and subsequently crashed. Sure that someone else knows their secret, Judith insists that she and Dan leave for Mexico immediately but separately. Jenny phones and threatens to call the police unless Dan comes to see her; at Jenny's house, Dan finds her dead body and Klein, who is sure Dan killed Stanton and that Judith is covering for him.

Dan begs for a chance to regain



...Bob Hoskins

his memory of that night, so Klein goes with him to the wreck. There Dan finds the chemically preserved body of Dan Merrick; he in fact is Stanton, but with Merrick's surgically reconstructed face. Dan flashes back to New Year's Eve: Judith shoots and kills Merrick; they dump the body in the wreck, then crash on the way back. Klein is shot by Judith, who drives the dazed Dan/Stanton away, pursued by a police helicopter. As the unhinged Judith drives over the cliff edge, Dan/Stanton throws himself clear.

Derived from Richard Neely's more evocatively titled novel, *The Plastic Nightmare*, German writer/director Wolfgang Petersen's first American feature is a solidly entertaining, plot-driven thriller which, although it requires an initial act of faith from its audience, rewards them with an intelligent, satisfying mystery. The initial premise – a man emerges from a near-fatal accident with all his mental faculties intact but suffering from an amnesia that blocks all recollection of events leading up to the crash – is transparently a fictional device. However, once one accepts this premise, the logic of Petersen's skilfully constructed screenplay is perfectly consistent.

As Dan Merrick struggles to piece together the jigsaw of his personal life using fragments of contradictory information, the audience knows only what he knows, a strategy which reinforces the sense of disorientation and unease. Petersen has said that he was aiming for "something that went beyond suspense, something that went deeper. That would touch people's fear of nightmares". And despite the importance of the plot in establishing the overall tone, it is not only through narrative that he has succeeded in achieving this. Repeated flashbacks to the crash, the recurring image of a head-and-shoulders in glass bursting apart, and the fog that wreathes the old shipwreck (just as an amnesiac miasma obscures Dan's memory of the past), all contribute to the nightmarish mood.

Only the aesthetic compromises enforced by a limited budget – too many talky scenes in rooms, and some studio-bound scenes on the shipwreck – work against a complete suspension of disbelief. An underused male star with leading-man looks but the versatility and depth of a good character actor, Tom Berenger turns in another fine performance – no mean achievement when one considers that his character is a virtual blank, a jumble of psychic fragments experienced in a state of child-like vulnerability and confusion.

Nigel Floyd



Lenny Henry: before...

Certificate

15

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Touchstone Pictures

In association with

Silver Screen Partners

IV/Sandollar

Productions

Executive Producers

Sandy Gallin

Howard Rosenman

Producers

Carol Baum

Teri Schwartz

Associate Producer

Howard M. Brickner

Production

Co-ordinators

Thais Zoé

NY:

Ingrid Johanson

Unit Production

Manager

D. Scott Easton

Location Managers

George Herthel

NY:

Grant H. Reid

Casting

Pat Golden

Associate:

Kim Hardin

Extras:

Central Casting

Jimmy Jue

Voice:

Barbara Harris

NY:

John McCabe

Extras NY:

Sylvia Fay

Assistant Directors

Ellen H. Schwartz

Bettiann Fishman

Nandi Bowe

NY:

Dana J. Kuznetzkoff

Screenplay

Andy Breckman

Director of

Photography

Tom Ackerman

Colour

Technicolor

Airplane Model

Photography

4-Ward Productions

Camera Operators

David Parrish

NY:

Alicia Weber

Steadicam Operator

Dave Knox

Opticals

Pacific Title

Editor

Kent Beyda

Production Designer

John DeCuir Jr

Art Director

Geoff Hubbard

Set Design

Louis M. Mann

Set Decorators

Karen A. O'Hara

NY:

Leslie Bloom

Production

Illustrator

Carl Aldana

Special Effects

Co-ordinators

Calvin Joe Acord

NY:

Al Griswold

Music

Marc Marder

Music Director

Shirley Walker

Orchestrations

Marc Marder

Supervising Music

Editor

Charles Martin Inouye

Songs

"Small People"

by David Marley,

performed by Ziggy

Marley; "Walk the

Line" by Tena Clark,

Dee Harvey,

performed by Gladys

Knight; "The

Underground" by

Bernadette Cooper,

Greg Royal, performed

by Bernadette Cooper;

"If I Can't Sell It, I'll

Just Keep Sittin' On It"

by Alex Hill, Andy

Razaf, performed

by Ruth Brown; "Cold

Gettin' Busy" by Mike-

Mike, Jay McGowan,

C.C. Orange,

performed by The

Fellas; "Porque No

Unirnos" by Thomas

Kukulies, Roberto

Herrador, performed

by Salsa Picante;

"Get a Little Stupid"

by Mike-Mike,

Jay McGowan,

C.C. Orange,

performed by The

Chill Deal Boyz;

"Carver Theme"

performed by Angeles

String Quartet; "Sir

Lancelot" by Reggie

Calloway, Vincent

Calloway, performed

by Calloway; "The FBI

Sting", "East Village

Brawl" by Marc

Marder, Bruce

Nazarian; "Society

Ball" by Dan Kirsten;

"Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah"

by Ray Gilbert,

Allie Wrubel

Costume Design

Abigail Murray

Costume

Supervisors

Dan Bronson

NY:

Helen P. Butler

Set Costumers

Murray Lantz

Taryn Walsh

Make-up

Miles Pope Design:

John Caglione Jr

Doug Drexler

Key Character:

Michelle Burke

Lenny Henry:

Norma Hill

Key:

Marie Carter

NY:

Bernadette Mazur

Additional Special

Make-up Effects

KNB EFX Group

Title Design

Saxon/Ross Film

Design

Supervising Sound

Editors

Bruce Fortune

Gordon Ecker

Sound Editors

Richard E. Yawn

John Kwiatkowski

Richard Burton

Anthony R. Milch

Supervising ADR

Editor

Becky Sullivan

ADR Editor

Holly Huckins

Supervising Foley

Editor

Leslie Gaulin

Foley Editors

Shawn Sykora

Steven J. Schwabbe

Sound Recordists

Russell Williams

Jack Keller

David Behle

Debra Dobb

NY:

Tod A. Maitland

Music:

John Richards

Tim Boyle

ADR Recordist

Doc Kane

Foley Recordist

Bruce R. Bell

Sound Re-recordists

Robert J. Litt

Greg P. Russell

Elliot Tyson

Dolby stereo

Sound Effects

Co-ordinators

John Michael Fanaris

Blake Marion

Tobie Joanne Jackson

Sound Effects

Gary Bluffer

Airplane Technical

Adviser

Randy Kramer

Consultants

Visual:

Ina Mayhew

Othello:

Richard Ericson

Production

Assistants

Robin Allen Jono

Donny Kelly

Joshua Levinson

Luke Mason

George Maya

Alan Schlaifer

NY Key:

Sean Ferguson

Stunt Co-ordinators

Alan Oliney

NY:

Phil Neilson

Cast

Lenny Henry

Miles Pope

Frank Langella

Frank Luchino/Leland

Carver

Charles Lane

Duane

J. T. Walsh

Craig Houston

Anne-Marie Johnson

Kristi Reeves

Andreas Katsulas

Anthony

Michael McKean

Harvey Cooper

Peggy Lipton

Rita

Bill Raymond

Grunfeld

James Earl Jones

Himself

Darnell Williams

Tyler

Christopher Collins

Frank LaMotta

Melvin Van Peebles

Taxi Driver

Ruth Brown

Martha

Fantasia Owens

Ruth

Joe Bellan

Janitor

James Landi

FBI Driver

Beth Robbins

FBI Agent

Jim Gavin

Helicopter Pilot

Cynthia Blackledge

Eric Briant Wells

Acting Students

Valerie Holvick

Red-haired Acting

Student

Hazel Goodman

Maria C. Hurtado

Miles' Neighbours

Katie Graves

Ticket Agent

Greg Travis

Orlando Ticket Agent

James Bilbrey

Man on Line

Laura Schaeffer

Stewardess

James Mathers

Pilot

Jonathan Frechette

Flight Engineer

Michael Baskin

Airplane Husband

Tracy Brooks Swope

Airplane Wife

Robert Black

Joseph A. Jackson

Cab Men

Mik Scriba

Police Sergeant

Ken Miles

Cop

Clifford Shegog

Police Line-up Man

Lilyan Chauvin

Police-station Woman

Raymond Forchion

Burly Cop

Karen Willins

Karen

Ilona Wilson

Lola

Roselyn D. Schwartz

FBI Secretary

Peter Fitzgerald

Horror-movie Actor

George Riddick

Fifth Avenue

Pedestrian

Damon Pooser

Brother

Olivia Sklar

Cab Woman

Grant Owens

Senator

Joyce Meadows

FBI Receptionist

Michael White

Victor Colicchio

Bobby Johnson

Alley Guys

Fred Springer

Country Club

Receptionist

Glenn David

Calloway

Distinguished Man

Anthony Johnson

Audition Actor

Jane Maria Robbins

Director's Assistant

Bettiann Fishman

Waitress

Shannon Holt

Desdemona

Lynne Griffin

Emilia

Judson Scott



...after & after

◀ Murphy in *Coming to America*, and Lenny Henry himself making a splash on TV as Steve Martin), but the notion of black stars whiting up still has more entertainment mileage in it than the reverse process. Henry's prosthetic transformation – courtesy of the team which provided *Dick Tracy*'s gallery of grotesques – is certainly dramatic, and if it is not entirely convincing, that does nothing to diminish *True Identity*'s comic tensions.

These are not inconsiderable. Henry portrays with some sensitivity Miles Pope's reactions to the way people's attitudes towards him change with his skin colour. As a struggling black actor, Miles is encouraged to play pimp roles and is told by his director to 'get down with his bad self', while with a white face and a hit man's suit he is able to hail taxis for bemused brothers.

In one scene, taking a taxi to the Mafia men's golf club, Miles sets about applying his white 'look' while the unseeing driver (a rather poignant cameo by Melvin Van Peebles, who pioneered popular, black-led cinema entertainment) harangues him on the sacrifices of racial integrity African-Americans have made to gain admittance to the country club.

In this context, the rather stereotypical designer blackness of Miles' girlfriend and helpmeet Kristi is a let-down, and there is an irritating simple-mindedness in the film's use of Shakespeare as a signifier of cultural respectability. In the end, though, this is Lenny Henry's film: it was a brave move for him to play an American, and judging by the warm reception accorded *True Identity* on the other side of the Atlantic, he seems to have pulled it off. It is perhaps a little ironic that the film is most entertaining when Henry's considerable comic gifts are put to work exploiting Hollywood's current favourite racial stereotype, the witless mafioso.

Ben Thompson

Welcome Home Roxy Carmichael

Certificate
12
Distributor
Castle Premier
Production Company
ITC Entertainment
Executive Producer
Karen Leigh Hopkins
Producer
Penney Finkelman
Cox
Executive in Charge of Production
Dennis A. Brown
Production Executive
Lisa Liberman
Production Controller
Ben Montanio
Production Co-ordinator
Diane Katz
Production Manager
Stephen M. McEveety
Location Managers
Michael Neale
Ohio:
Ellen Supp
Post-production Supervisor
John Forrest Niss
Post-production Co-ordinators
Joanne Chee
Bryan Ellenburg
Casting
Mali Finn
Extras:
Holzer Roche Casting
Assistant Directors
John T. Kretschmer
Jeff Rafner
Screenplay
Karen Leigh Hopkins
Director of Photography
Paul Elliott
Colour
Technicolor
Steadicam Operator
Bruce A. Greene
Video
Steve Austin
Editor
Bruce Green
Associate Editor
William Goldenberg
Production Designer
Dena Roth
Art Directors
John Myhre
Rosemary
Brandenburg
Ohio:
Nina Ruscio
Set Designers
Richard G. Huston
Ohio:
James A. Gelarden
Set Decorators
Tom Talbert
Ohio:
Maria Nay
Set Dressers
Christopher C. Parker
Jane Van Tاملen
Scenic Artist
Michael D. Costello
Storyboard Artist
Alan Hoffman
Music
Thomas Newman
Music Extract
"Sperate, o figli!" from *Nabucco* by Giuseppe Verdi, performed by The Vienna State Opera, Vienna State Orchestra
Orchestrations
Thomas Pasatieri
Brad Dechter
Music Editor
Bill Bernstein
Music Consultants
Becky Mancuso
Tim Sexton

Songs
"In Roxy's Eyes", "Don't Look at Me" by and performed by Melissa Etheridge; "Dancing Under a Latin Moon" by Michael Jay, Alan Roy Scott, Robbie Seldman, performed by Candi; "Misty" by Errol Garner, Johnny Burke, performed by Johnny Mathis; "Born to Be Wild" by Mars Bonfire, "My Way" by Jacques Revaux, Claude Franois, Gilles Thibault, Paul Anka, performed by Lillian Rein, Steve Lowry, Alan Kuehne, Doug MacDonald, Wally Minko, Fred Petry
Costume Design
Betsy Heimann
Costumers
Janet Sobel
Matthew Jacobsen
Make-up
Julie Hewett
Titles
Pacific Title
Supervising Sound Editor
Dane A. Davis
Sound Editors
Dialogue:
Kimberley Voigt
Randy Vandegrift
ADR Editor
G. W. Brown
Foley Editors
Tom Hammond
Mark Larry
Sound Recordists
David Kelson
David Getz
ADR:
Doc Kane
Foley:
Robert Deschaine
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Terry Porter
Mel Metcalfe
Dave Hudson
John Vigran
Sound Effects Editor
John Kwiatkowski
Foley Artists
Jerry Trent
Joan Rowe
Production Assistants
Warren Archibald
Derin Gibson
Elisa Kohn
Janet Scott
Post-production:
Johan Linna
Stunt Co-ordinator
Ernie Orsatti
Stunts
Debbie Evans
John Robotham
Animal Trainer
Paul Hoskinson
Animals of Distinction

Cast
Winona Ryder
Dinky Bossetti
Jeff Daniels
Denton Webb
Laila Robins
Elizabeth Zaks
Thomas Wilson
Brown
Gerald Howells
Joan McMurtry
Barbara Webb
Graham Beckel
Les Bossetti
Frances Fisher
Rochelle Rossetti
Robby Kiger
Beannie Billings
Dinah Manoff
Evelyn Whittacher
Sachi Parker
Libby Ohlemacher
Stephen Tobolowsky
Mayor Bill Klepler

Nicole Mercurio
Louise Garwoski
John Short
Ronald Reems
Robin Thomas
Scotty Sandholler
Valerie Landsberg
Miss Day Ashburn
Rhonda Aldrich
Charmaine
Ava Fabian
Roxy Carmichael
Carla Gugino
Young Roxy
Rob King
Young Denton
Daniel Fekete
Denny Jnr
Beth Grant
Lillian Legerfield
Heidi Swedberg
Andrea Stein
Angela Paton
Gloria Sikes
Patrick McCollough
David Skism
Mark Arnott
Bill Crampton
Hal Harris
Raymond Emirts
Linda Cox
Kathy Sherwin
Kevin Skousen
Gene Briskell
Nada Despotovich
Laurie Desmond
John C. Moskoff
Officer Tarolo
Ron Perkins
Will Groom
Hank Underwood
Eddie Waters
Raymond Hanis
Man at Centre
Tiffany Ashley
Amy Moore Davis
Girls on Bus
Ron Marlin Jnr
Redhaired Boy on Bus
Gene Farrington
Bus Driver
Jim Pirri
Jim Reese
Terence Evans
Joe Nesnow
Men at Legion Hall
Peter Strong
Fisherman
Rocky Krakoff
Carl Steven
Kids Throwing Buckeyes
Frank Milewski
"Amen" Man
Jennifer Loesch
Laura Loesch
Baby Sarah Webb
Meg Harrington
Laura Collier
Louise Yaffe
Eleanor Schiff
Women on Bench
Damien Dietz
Whipped Cream Boy
Judith Saunders
Linda Evans Lookalike
Janet Graham
Sneeze Victim
Karen Mussette
Libby's New Friend
Richard Roylance
Limo Driver at Ball
Joseph Cocuzzo
Joanne Cocuzzo
Grandparents
Crossing Road
Nancy Abrahams
Joseph Abrahams
Jamie Abrahams
Fishing Family

8,627 feet
96 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Jim Abrahams

● Roxy Carmichael and Denton Webb are teenage lovers whose relationship ends when Roxy announces that she is going to leave the small town of Clyde, Ohio, where they have both grown up. Fifteen years later, the town prepares for Roxy's homecoming. She has become a minor celebrity and her visit will culminate in the inauguration of the Roxy Carmichael Centre for Drama and Cosmetology. Denton, who is now married with children, waits expectantly for her return, to his wife's chagrin. Roxy's ex-best friend Evelyn also waits in anticipation of a reunion. Equally intrigued by the event is teenage misfit Dinky Bossetti. Dinky scorns small-town life and in particular her adoptive parents who run the local carpet shop. Her parents, exasperated by their oddball daughter, plan to send her to boarding-school. Aside from her interest in Roxy, Dinky's one other pleasure is her menagerie of stray animals.

As the big day draws near, Dinky learns from Denton that Roxy left town because she was pregnant and that the baby was deposited outside the local hospital. Dinky starts to believe that she is Roxy's daughter. At school, Dinky's eccentric behaviour draws her to the attention of guidance counsellor Beth Zaks, and they strike up a friendship. Dinky also has an admirer in the form of classmate Gerald Howells. Dinky, however, is not impressed by him.

One afternoon, Dinky turns up at her parents' shop to find them making love. Shocked, she decides to leave home. Counting on the reunion with her 'real' mother, she persuades



Identifying: Winona Ryder

Beth to drive her to the local shopping mall so that she can buy clothes for the homecoming party. Crisis point is reached in the Webb household and Denton's wife leaves. Later, Denton bumps into Gerald, who reveals that Dinky thinks she is his and Roxy's daughter.

On the big night, instead of appearing personally, Roxy sends a commemorative plaque. Dinky is distraught. She is even more upset when Denton explains that she is not his and Roxy's daughter, since the baby died. She runs off to seek solace with her animals. The following day, she turns up at Gerald's and declares that she might reciprocate his feelings.

● The trouble with *Welcome Home Roxy Carmichael* is that it pulls in too many directions at once. Small-town satire jostles with mid-life and teen crises in a too familiar tale of individuals searching for their true selves. Buried beneath the clichés, there is a hint of a more promising project based on the idea of small-time success and the American dream (Roxy's fame consists in having a song written about her).

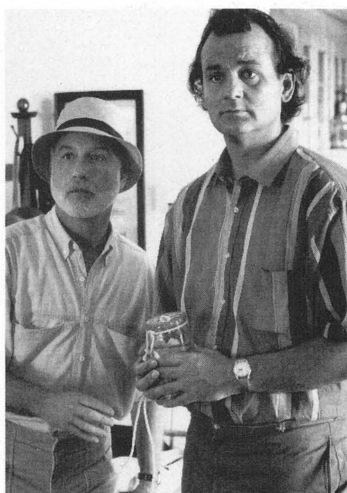
Most interesting is the thread which deals with a young woman's search for sexual identity. Dinky graduates from adolescent infatuation with both the absent Roxy and her teacher Beth to her rather unsatisfactory fellow student Gerald. A relationship between Roxy and her best friend Evelyn is also implied, but this intriguing storyline seems to have got lost (one wonders how much of screenwriter Karen Leigh Hopkins' script has remained intact).

The rest of the narrative chases all over the place trying to tie up the loose sub-plots. Director Jim Abrahams attempts to sharpen the film's satirical edge, but the jokes rely too much on a conventionally kitschy, bitchy portrayal of the small town. He is also inclined to overstatement, as in the innumerable shots of a faceless Roxy swanning around her Hollywood home.

Winona Ryder dominates the screen (Jeff Daniels' stilted performance as Denton is totally forgettable). Ryder is currently Hollywood's most troubled daughter, and no less so here. Clad in black and with hair carefully tousled (*de rigueur* for an angst-ridden teenager), her *Beetlejuice* days do not seem so far away. After the growing pains of *Heathers*, *Mermaids*, *Edward Scissorhands* and even *Great Balls of Fire*, she has finally moved to centre stage. This could have been an interesting film, exploiting Ryder's talents to the full. Instead, it capitulates, ending up as just another tale about a girl who discovers she's pretty in pink.

Lizzie Francke

What About Bob?



Testing: Richard Dreyfuss, Bill Murray

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Warner Bros

Production Company

Touchstone

In association with

Touchwood Pacific

Partners I

Producer

Laura Ziskin

Co-producer

Bernard Williams

Production

Co-ordinators

Dana Williams

Lisa Lynn Kearsley

NY:

Wendi Haas

Unit Production

Managers

David Anderson

NY:

Jennifer Ogden

Location Managers

Charles Baxter

NY:

Mark A. Baker

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Sandy Isaac

Casting

Glenn Daniels

Associate:

Jill Greenberg

Extras:

William Dean

Assistant Directors

James W.

Skotchdopole

Donald J. Lee Jnr

Cyd Adams

Screenplay

Tom Schulman

Story

Alvin Sargent

Laura Ziskin

Director of

Photography

Michael Ballhaus

Colour

Technicolor

Additional

Photography

David M. Walsh

Camera Operator

David M. Dunlap

Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

The Effects House

Corporation

Editor

Anne V. Coates

Production Designer

Les Dille

Art Directors

Jack Blackman

NY:

Beth Kuhn

Set Design

Roger Fortune

Set Decorators

Anne Kuljian

NY:

Carol Joffe

Special Effects

Supervisor

Richard O. Helmer

Music

Miles Goodman

Additional

Orchestrations

Oscar Castro-Neves

Thomas Pasatieri

Music Editor

Nancy Fogarty

Songs

"Jolt" by Gerry

Hurtado, Chris

Abbott, performed

by Skatemaster Tate

and the Concrete

Crew; "Brady Bunch

Theme" by Sherwood

Schwartz, Frank

DeVol; "Singin' in the

Rain" by Arthur

Freud, Nacio Herb

Brown; "Good

Morning America

Theme" by

Marvin Hamlisch,

Richard Hazard

Costume Design

Bernie Pollack

Costume Supervisor

Hugo Pena

Wardrobe

Supervisors

Susan J. Wright

David Dumais

Costumers

Marie A. Kaderbeck

Julie Lynn Glick

Bill Murray;

Jennifer Butler

Make-up Artists

Matthew Mungle

Bill Murray;

Dorothy J. Pearl

NY:

Fern Buchner

Title Design

Wayne Fitzgerald

Supervising Sound

Editor

Bill Phillips

Sound Editors

Hal Sanders

Pieter Hubbard

John Phillips

John Carr

Robert Warwick

ADR Editor

Devon Curry

Sound Recordists

Ed White

Music:

Joel Moss

ADR Recordist

Doc Kane

Foley Recordist

Bruce R. Bell

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordists

Denis Blackerby

Terry Porter

Mel Metcalfe

David J. Hudson

ADR Voices

Stephani Ryan

Noreen Reardon

Barbara Iley

Rosanna Huffman

Carlyle King

Greg Finley

Jack Kandel

David Randolph

Joseph Chapman

Javier Grijeda

Marsha Kramer

Ruth Britt

Gary Schwartz

Daamen Krall

Vernon Scott

Charles Bartlett

Foley Artists

Edward Steidele

Catherine Harper

Production

Assistants

Scott Harris

Timothy Lee

Stunt Co-ordinator

Dennis R. Scott

Stunts

Bobby Burns

Michael Steve Jones

Jim Kindelon

Cast

Bill Murray

Bob Wiley

Richard Dreyfuss

Dr Leo Marvin

Julie Hagerty

Fay Marvin

Charlie Korsmo

Siggy Marvin

Kathryn Erbe

Anna Marvin

Tom Aldredge

Mr Guttman

Susan Willis

Mrs Guttman

Roger Bowen

Phil

Fran Brill

Lily

Brian Reddy

Carswell Fensterwald

Doris Belack

Dr Tomsy

Melinda Mullins

Marie Grady

Marcella Lowery

Betty, Switchboard

Operator

Margot Welch

Gwen, Switchboard

Operator

Barbara Andres

Claire, Dr Marvin's

Secretary

Aida Turturro

Prostitute

Stuart Rudin

Crazy Man in New

York Street

Cortez Nance Jnr

Lobby Doorman

Lori Tan Chinn

Bus Driver

Dennis R. Scott

Motorcycle Cop

Charles Thomas

Baxter

Nursing Home Guard

Donald J. Lee Jnr

Nursing Home

Attendant

Reg E. Cathey

Howie, Director

Tom Stechschulte

Lennie, Producer

Russell Bobbitt

TV Crew Member

Richard Fancy

Minister

Joan Lunden

Special Appearance

8,920 feet

99 minutes

USA 1991

Director: Frank Oz

● Celebrated analyst Dr Leo Marvin (author of *Baby Steps*) inherits multi-phobic patient Bob Wiley from a colleague who claims to be leaving town. During their first session, Marvin introduces Wiley to his unique 'baby steps' therapy, which Bob immediately hails as a cure, proclaiming Marvin his saviour and panicking at the news of the doctor's impending vacation. Marvin, his wife and two children travel to a secluded town where they have recently purchased a lavish residence, thus incurring the wrath of a local couple, the Guttmans, who had been saving to buy the property.

Posing as a relative bearing important news, Bob secures Marvin's holiday number from his switchboard, and with great effort overcomes his fears to take a bus to the town. He discovers Marvin's address from the aggrieved Guttmans, and turns up at his door. Marvin suggests that Bob 'take a vacation' from his phobias until the doctor's return to work, with which advice Bob seems content and retires. But the next day, he reappears on Marvin's lawn announcing that he is taking his vacation in town.

Marvin is furious, but the family warm to Bob, offering him food, hospitality, and (when rain arrives) a bed for the night. Despite Marvin's protestations, Bob woos the family, winning their trust where Marvin has failed: their troubled son Siggy learns to overcome his fear of diving; daughter Anna talks openly of her hostility towards her father; and wife Fay is flattered by Bob's constant compliments. When a TV crew arrives to interview Marvin, Bob hijacks the broadcast and declares himself Marvin's star patient.

Marvin commits Bob to a local institution, but Bob secures his swift release by charming the staff and patients, and interprets Marvin's ploy as an elaborate, therapeutic psychodrama and praises his efforts. When the desperate Marvin drives Bob to a secluded spot and ties him to a tree with a bomb attached, Bob again interprets this as outlandish drama-therapy. Stumbling home, Marvin is greeted by a surprise birthday gathering which is promptly interrupted by Bob's miraculous reappearance - and the subsequent explosion of the dream house. Bob has deposited the 'props' indoors before joining the party, where he meets and seduces Marvin's sister. At their subsequent wedding, the incapacitated Marvin is unable to protest.

● Although Bill Murray's comic roles have traditionally exploited his sardonic, straight-▶

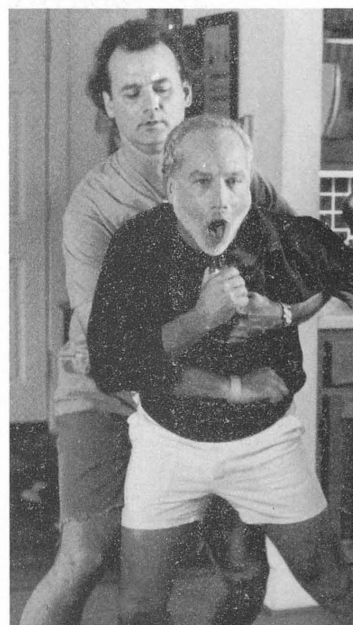
Reviews

Welcome Home
Roxy Carmichael
What About Bob?

◀ faced brand of wisecracking, this latest venture marks a significant departure. Eschewing the droll deadpan of yore, Murray becomes a belligerent, fidgety, awkward and irritating figure, his manic mannerisms quickly undermining Tom Schulman's script, which begs us to sympathise with the lunatic and applaud the breakdown of Dr Marvin's squeaky-clean life style. Things improve in the film's later sections when Bob's pathological fears turn to blind self-confidence, and Murray's more traditional comic talents come to the fore; whether wooing the staff at a mental home, or drooling delightfully on prime-time TV, Bob becomes an amiably arrogant clown. Richard Dreyfuss, meanwhile, descends ever further into crazed caricature, until the uncomfortable laughter of a coda in which the poor broken doctor is condemned to life with Bob.

As with Frank Oz's *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, this rather grim, black humour constantly battles with the flimsy narrative, producing an uneasy blend of the satirical and the saccharine. Schulman's declaration that the emotionally barren Marvin is ironically forced to 'grow' through his relationship with Bob suggests a typical 'Touchstone' tale in which differences are reconciled and everybody wins. Yet the tenor of Oz's direction is far more bleak, emphasising instead the unstoppable power of bloody-minded obsession. Bob becomes less a liberating angel than a random virus, infecting all who come into contact with him. A strange brew of humour and horror, *What About Bob?* is probably far too spiky to enjoy the popular success of the inferior *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, although for Murray it is (if nothing else) proof of a previously unseen versatility.

Mark Kermode



Viral: Bill Murray, Richard Dreyfuss

Yo, la peor de todas (I, the Worst of All)



The love... Assumpta Serna, Dominique Sarda

Certificate
15

Distributor
Electric

Production Company
GEA Cinematografica
For Assai

Communications/
Screening 22 Films

Executive Producer
Gilbert Marouani

Producer
Lita Stantic

Production
Co-ordinators

Marta Parga
Miriam Bendjui

Production Manager
Stella Fontan

Assistant Directors
Marcelo Rembado

Lelia Gonzalez
Alejandro Maci

Rodolfo Arze

Screenplay
Maria Luisa Bemberg

Antonio Larreta

Based on "The Traps
of Faith" from the
book *Sor Juana: Her*

Life and Her World
by Octavio Paz

Director of
Photography

Felix Monti

Camera Operator
Jorge Guillermo

Behnisch

Video
Ernesto Miras

Editor
Juan Carlos Macias

Production Designer
Voytek

Art Director

Daniel Mora

Set Co-ordinator
Gerardo Pietrapertosa

Special Effects
Enrique Gandaras

Rodolfo Denevi

Hugo Sica

Music

Luis Maria Serra

Costume Design
Graciela Galan

Wardrobe
Lidia Blanco

Lyrecia Malbert

Maria Molina

Maria Ester

Marta Mengo

Josefina Debasa

Make-up
Marta Blanco

Titles
Estudios Nazar

Sound Editor
Jorge Stavropoulos

Production
Assistant

Fabio Pallero

Subtitles
Cinetitres

Cast

Assumpta Serna

Sister Juana Ines
de la Cruz

Dominique Sarda

Vice-Reine Maria Luisa

Hector Alterio

Viceroy

Lautaro Murua

Archbishop of Mexico

Alberto Segado

Father Miranda

Franklin Caicedo

Santa Cruz, Bishop
of Puebla

Graciela Araujo

Sister Ursula

Gerardo Romano

Siguenza

Hugo Soto

Margara Alonso

Lidia Catalano

Margarita Padin

Alejandro Colunga

Rosario Blefari

Felisa Rocha

Emma Rivera

Fernando Noy

José Martin

Walter Soubrie

Jesus Berenguer

Guillermo Marin

Nicolas Alvarado

Susana Cortinez

Alice Elias

Monica Lacoste

Pedro Cano

Marcos Woinski

Isaac Haimovici

Nestor Sacco

Arnaldo

Colombaroli

Alejandro Maci

Oscar Milazzo

(Polvorita)

Nicolas Cardasco

Jean-Piere

Reguerraz

Lorena Lopez

Eliana Ronsisvalli

Fernanda Ronsisvalli

Andrea Rodriguez

Karina Allegue

Luciana

Mastromaura

Victoria Solarz

Cristina Scaramuzza

Norma Suzat

9,450 feet

105 minutes

Subtitles

Argentina 1990

Director: Maria Luisa Bemberg

● Mexico, the late seventeenth century. Sister Juana is famed throughout Mexico – and indeed Spain – for her learning. She writes and produces a play in the convent to celebrate the visit of the new viceroy and his wife, the vice-reine, Maria Luisa, who is immediately much taken with Juana. Many of her fellow nuns are envious of her, however, and the strict, embittered Sister Ursula determines to forestall any move to make Juana the Mother Abbess. She is aided in her campaign by the equally fanatical Archbishop.

Maria Luisa becomes a regular visitor at the convent and Sister Juana, having found a kindred spirit despite the superficial differences in their lives, composes increasingly passionate poems to her new patroness and protector. When Sister Ursula mounts a campaign to strip the nuns of their personal possessions, Maria Luisa intervenes on Sister Juana's behalf, saving her precious library, her telescope, and other curiosities in which she delights.

When Sister Ursula becomes abbess, Juana's library is closed, and her books dispersed or burnt. The viceroy is dismissed and returns to Spain with his wife, and even Father Miranda, Sister Juana's confessor, turns increasingly against her. Called to her mother's deathbed, she remembers her decision as a young girl to enter the convent, and attempts unsuccessfully to learn the identity of her father.

Back at the convent, she finds that only the ex-Jesuit Siguenza supports her. Tricked into writing a religious pamphlet she believes will be for private circulation only, she is horrified to find it published behind her back. As Mexico succumbs to floods and plagues, Juana devotes herself to the sick and dying; seeing her complete selflessness, Father Miranda offers once more to become her confessor. As the worst of the plague abates, Juana agrees to renounce her former ways, her quest for knowledge and the life of the intellect, and signs a statement to this effect in her own blood, with the words, "I, the worst of all".

● Maria Luisa Bemberg has put herself in triple jeopardy with a subject that encapsulates three areas the cinema has notoriously found difficult to handle: the world of the intellect, artistic creativity, and the vagaries of convent life. In her bio-pic of one of Mexico's greatest poets, Juana Ines de la Cruz, Bemberg does not always avoid the pitfalls. Her heroine gazes rapturously heavenwards, and having rejected sexuality ("To me, the body is

abstract"), suffers the physical world's revenge on her through the plague. What saves the film is Bemberg's single-mindedness. Both director and script – based on an Octavio Paz essay – have fastened on Juana as closely as a penitent gazing on a devotional painting, which mirrors the heroine's 'obsessive' desire for knowledge.

Bemberg's anti-naturalistic style usefully sets the film at a distance from the novelettish world of costume drama. *I, the Worst of All* is also unusual among stories of convent life in that it is not about the discovery or loss of vocation but about a woman joining the church for quite other reasons, to find, as Bemberg has put it, "a room of her own", a world of intellectual challenge from which women are otherwise excluded, a world symbolised by the masculine garments she dons as a young girl.

Juana's vow to dress as a nun because she is not permitted to dress as a man has a ring of childish defiance. But it is, the film suggests, determined by the wider history of Mexico itself, a society engaged in combating strains of primitivism and provincialism with notions of a greater purity. Spain, as the dialogue between the various scheming clerics makes plain, is a touchstone of corruption (rather than a source of learning), against which Mexico's purity may be measured.

Juana is caught between her love for her protectress, the vice-reine Maria Luisa (played by Dominique Sanda as someone quite physically at odds with her domestic and social role) and her initially dutiful respect for Father Miranda, her confessor. Juana and Maria Luisa are linked romantically – it is not the first time that Bemberg has shown the homosexual relationship in a therapeutic light – but also by the bonds of possibility. Maria Luisa embodies the life from which Juana has so decisively turned away; Juana acts out Maria Luisa's desires.

If their relationship is an exchange of equals, Juana's with Father Miranda is built on the premise of her ultimate and complete submission. Just as Miss Mary, in Bemberg's earlier film, closed the door on her brief moment of fulfilment, so Juana here completes her subjection to Father Miranda's will in a gesture of total self-abnegation, a paradigmatic example of female submissiveness. It's the fact that Bemberg has alerted us throughout to quite other possibilities that makes this ending so shocking, and lends it an icy defiance that reverberates back through the film, erasing its hesitations and occasional awkwardness.

Verina Glaessner

Hancock

Distributor
BBC TV
Production Company
BBC Films
For Screen One
Executive Producer
Richard Broke
Producer
Paul Marcus
Production Associates
Peter Kondar
Joanna Gueritz
Production Managers
Melanie Dicks
Susannah MacLean
Casting
Maggie Anson
Assistant Directors
Paul Judges
Todd Austin
David Reid
Screenplay
William Humble
Director of Photography
John McGlashan
In colour
Graphics Designer
Charles McGhie
Editor
Jerry Leon
Production Designer
Geoff Powell
Beach Sculptures
Fred Darrington
Visual Effects Designer
Colin Gorry
Music
Tony Britten
Costume Design
Les Lansdown
Wardrobe
Neil Sweetmore
Donna Nicholls
Make-up
Frances Hannon
Christine Walmsley-
Cotham
Sound Editor
Joe Matthews
Sound Recordist
Terry Elms
Sound Re-recordist
Keith Marriner
Production Consultants
Freddie Hancock
Punch and Judy:
John Styles
Stunt Co-ordinator
Peter Brayham
Stunts
Mark Henson
Helen Caldwell

Cast
Alfred Molina
Tony Hancock
Frances Barber
Freddie Hancock
Mel Martin
Cicely Hancock
Nick Burnell
Patrick Cargill
Malcolm Sinclair
John Le Mesurier
Jim Carter
Ray Galton
Clive Russell
Alan Simpson
Ken Kitson
Bus Driver
Stephen Bill
Hugh Lloyd
Danny Schiller
Percy
Fred Darrington
Beach Sculptor
Salih Ozdemirciler
Nicholas
Jane Kaeser
Girlfriend
Harry Ditson
American TV
Executive
Terry Diab
Mrs Hugh Lloyd
Miranda Forbes
Health Farm
Receptionist
Colin Bruce
Junior
Matt Bradley
Mel
Vincent Driver
American Director
Sebastian Knapp
Boy in Film
Bradley Lavelle
American Doctor
Terry Johnson
Writer
Richard Hawley
Taxi Driver
Kenneth Gilbert
Businessman on Plane
Edda Sharpe
Ian Brimble
Andy McEwan
Barry McCarthy
Paul Brooke
Alan Palmer
Chris Crooks
Reporters

10,440 feet
116 minutes

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Tony Smith



Comedian Tony Hancock, at the peak of his popularity, records "The Blood Donor" in 1961 at BBC Television Centre. Keen to break into the international market with his second cinema film, he falls out with writers Alan Simpson and Ray Galton; he finds their scripts too parochial. Friend and fellow performer John Le Mesurier tries to reassure him during the shooting of *The Punch and Judy Man*, but Hancock finds most relief in the company of drink, books of philosophy or his female publicist Freddie.

The more he drinks, the more relations with his wife Cicely sour. Now cut adrift from the BBC, Hancock tries to develop new projects, but his self-confidence is fast waning, and when he emerges before the public again – on-stage – he keeps to well-tested material. Meanwhile, his relationship with Freddie deepens. She tries hard to control his drinking, and books him into a health farm.

Hancock's career appears stalled. A trip to New York to interest executives proves humiliating; the ATV television series he makes in Britain is poorly received. Then the Disney company hire him for a role in the film *Bullwhip Griffin*, but he is replaced after fainting on the set. Returning from Hollywood, he begins drinking more heavily than ever.

Now divorced from Cicely, Hancock marries Freddie after another drying-out session. He makes little headway writing an ambitious comedy about evolution, and tries to restore relations with Galton and Simpson, but they remain distant. Freddie, still in love but unable to live with his alcoholism, moves ►



Glory past: Alfred Molina

Reviews

Yo, la peor de todas
Hancock

◀ out. He performs a one-man show at the Royal Festival Hall, televised by the BBC; the audience is encouraging, but he seems burned out. He next tries his fortune in Australia, where a TV series is planned; "My best is yet to come", he tells a press conference. An end title informs us that Hancock committed suicide in June 1969, leaving a note: "Things seemed to go wrong too many times".

● *Hancock* begins with the lad himself – or rather Alfred Molina's studied impersonation – recording "The Blood Donor" before a BBC studio audience. The hat, the raincoat, the Galton and Simpson lines, are all present and correct; the props department have even dug out some spectacles to match those worn in the original by Patrick Cargill (as the doctor). What cannot be recreated, here and elsewhere, is Tony Hancock's comic brilliance: for all Molina's mimicry of "Stone the crows" expressions and cadences, of hands mournfully cradling the chin, the film simply presents a pale cardboard cut-out.

By launching into the last seven years of decline without any sense of the comedian's glory days, *Hancock* becomes a morose study of one man's pig-headedness, self-doubt and self-destruction. Fresh from analysing pianist John Ogdon (another artist in extremis portrayed by Molina) in the BBC play *Virtuoso*, writer William Humble trudges through familiar territory, though he takes dramatic liberties and misses several key factors. The "Blood Donor" recording proceeds without any coverage of the car accident that jangled Hancock's nerves, precipitated his loss of confidence, and caused him to rely on teleprompters; Freddie's suicide attempts have equally been erased. (Indeed, Freddie's character is treated throughout with the softest of kid gloves.)

With Hancock's career on the slide, humour can only creep in through the back door. At times Molina, Humble and director Tony Smith conspire to make their 'real life' scenes resemble a Hancock script. They succeed momentarily when Molina/Hancock imitates the penguins at London Zoo before a meeting with Galton and Simpson; they fail drastically when he stumbles carrying encyclopaedia volumes to his love nest.

Throughout, Smith never resists the obvious. Drinks and vodka bottles loom ominously in the foreground; the camera adopts an Expressionist angle for Molina mounting Freddie's stairs. By piling on the fusty artifice, Smith makes it even harder for the real Hancock to emerge from this dull bio-pic.

Geoff Brown

Tell Me that You Love Me

Distributor
BBC TV
Production Company
BBC Films
For Screen One
In association with
BBC Enterprises
Executive Producer
Richard Broke
Producer
Sarah Curtis
Production Associate
Tim Ironside Wood
Production Manager
Paul Judges
Casting
Gail Stevens
Assistant Directors
Dermot Boyd
Clare Nicholson
Ian Sherward
Screenplay
Adrian Hodges
Director of Photography
John McGlashan
In colour
Visual Effects Design
Roger Turner
Editor
Mark Day
Production Designer
Chris Robilliard
Graphic Designer
Rosemary Turner
Magazine Graphics
Tamsin Robilliard
Music
Bill Connor
Costume Design
Pat Godfrey
Make-up Design
Daphne Croker
Sound Editor
Julie Buckland
Sound Recordist
Roger Long
Sound Re-recordist
Aard Wirtz
Production Assistant
Thelma Helsby

Cast
Judith Scott
Laura Simms
Sean Bean
Gabriel Lewis
James Wilby
Michael Evans
Ursula Jones
Jilly
David Lyon
Leslie Boyd
Janet Amsbury
Deirdre
Candida Gubbins
Helen
Pippa Hinchley
Julie
Lisa Orgolini
Waitress, Lucy
Barbara Ward
Mary
Paul Lacoux
Man in Wine Bar
Rowena Cooper
Connie Simms
Laura Davenport
Davina
Michael Cochrane
Geoff
Terence Hillyer
Geoff's Friend

8,820 feet
98 minutes

United Kingdom 1991

Director: Bruce MacDonald

TV MOVIE Laura Simms is in her early thirties and the editor of a glossy women's magazine, *Woman Now*. Her ex-boyfriend Michael, whom she still sees, is charming, unreliable and unfaithful. Over Laura's birthday dinner, he tells her that he is getting married to his boss, Davina. When Laura, who is upset, goes to the ladies', he writes their waitress' telephone number on the bill, which Laura sees on her return. A scene ensues and Laura rushes out of the restaurant, losing her way in a dark alley. She is followed by a stranger, a young man who saw what happened and paid the bill. He courteously offers to call a taxi for Laura.

After Michael's promiscuity, and under pressure from her mother, Laura is looking for a conventional relationship. When the handsome, well-mannered stranger, Gabriel Lewis, gets in touch, she enjoys the attention he pays her, even if he is too attentive at times. He is a little mysterious about his background, though he tells her he is a lawyer. He takes a high moral tone about other people's behaviour, especially Michael's, but also Laura's. There are other incidents which give Laura cause for concern, but she puts her anxieties to the back of her mind. On one occasion, Gabriel punches a man in a restaurant who drunkenly makes a pass at her. But then he has twelve dozen red roses delivered to her office.

Gabriel becomes insanely jealous of Michael and goes to his flat, threatening him and warning him to stay away from Laura. Michael, whose wedding to Davina has been called off, begs Laura to let him make enquiries about Gabriel. Meanwhile, Gabriel's increasingly obsessive behaviour has begun to worry Laura, and she decides to see him less frequently. He leaves a string of messages on her answerphone which she does not answer. One evening, Michael returns to his flat to find it smashed up. Suspecting Gabriel, and afraid for Laura's safety, he tries to contact her, without success. Arriving home from an office party, Laura finds Gabriel already there. He threatens her with a knife, but in the course of a struggle, he turns it against himself.

● *Tell Me that You Love Me* is the second in BBC1's autumn series of Screen One films. Without any of the patronising tone which often accompanies pastiche, it reworks the classic women's magazine romance so that it comes over as fake and fanciful as Mills and Boon. The deliberately light drama has menacing undertones which

slowly and with perfect timing come to the surface.

The opening sequences contain every romantic cliché in the book: candlelit dinners, beautiful clothes, a tousled, irresponsible and irresistible ex-boyfriend, and a strong, silent lover. *Tell Me* plays with the conventions of romance. First, there's the element of intrigue. Laura doesn't mind that Gabriel chooses not to reveal everything about himself on their first date. Mystery makes him sexy. She can't quite believe her luck in finding a man who treats women with the chivalry that romantic magazines used to tell their readers to expect. Second, there are the lovers' tiffs, which make making up even better.

Third, there is 'impression management'. When success for women is still measured in terms of their success in personal life, what could be more appropriate for the editor of a glossy women's magazine than to be seen with a handsome professional man like Gabriel? An aura of sexual snobbery pervades the *Woman Now* office. The upwardly mobile career girls have relationships with men like themselves which they hope will lead to marriage and children. They look down on the office 'tart' and her sleazy affair with the middle-aged editor-in-chief, and they envy Laura her relationship with the gallant and debonair Gabriel.

The drama that unfolds occurs because Laura follows the rules of romance. She lets work, for once, take second place in her life; she 'falls' in love, throwing caution to the wind and allowing herself to be swept away on a wave of passion. The morality and the menace of *Tell Me that You Love Me* are very contemporary. The post-feminist woman reveals herself to be as vulnerable and needy as the office tart, and her choices are just as limited. The heroine's desire to give up control of her life to a 'masterful' hero is at the heart of the romantic narrative. But real life is now too dangerous for this to be anything more than a fantasy, a nostalgia for the sort of love stories once, but no longer, found in teen magazines.

But *Tell Me that You Love Me* also follows its own internal rules. In order to retain the playfulness of pastiche, it must remain ambivalent in its conclusion and avoid becoming a social critique. In this case, a romance becomes a thriller, the heroine who discovers her dream lover to be a violent and dangerous man cannot be shown to have learnt her lesson. How she feels, and what will happen to her next, remain uncertain.

Angela McRobbie

Video

William Green reviews every retail/retail premiere video and Mark Kermode every rental/rental premiere video released this month

★ Highlights

Reviews in **Monthly Film Bulletin (MFB)** and **Sight and Sound** are cited in parentheses

Rental

Child's Play 2

CIC VHA 1491

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director John Lafia Chucky's back – Brad Dourif provides the demonic voices, and the set-pieces are nicely nasty. (MFB No. 684)

Desperate Hours

FoxVideo 2581

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Michael Cimino Cimino's remake of William Wyler's 1955 classic (with Mickey Rourke in Bogart's role) lacks the claustrophobia of the original but remains sporadically gripping. (MFB No. 686)

Filofax

Hollywood Pictures D940732

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Arthur Hiller Car thief James Belushi finds the filofax of successful businessman Charles Grodin and steps into his shoes. Predictable mixing 'n' matching follows. (S&S June 1991)

Hamlet

20:20 Vision NVT 12762

USA 1990

Certificate PG Director Franco Zeffirelli Mel Gibson is flawless as the troubled Dane, but with little new insight to offer into the text, Zeffirelli falls back on his distinctive visuals. (S&S May 1991)

Highlander II – The Quickening

Entertainment EVV 1203

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Russell Mulcahy Extremely ropery but popular sequel to the inventive original. Sean Connery returns from the dead, and Christopher Lambert is revealed as an alien. Ridiculous. (S&S June 1991)

Impromptu

RCA/Columbia 12125

UK 1989

Certificate 15 Director James Lapine Co-author of *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Into the Woods* with Stephen Sondheim, Lapine's directorial debut is a quirky and off-beat romance about a young woman pursuing Chopin. (MFB No. 687)

Look Who's Talking Too

20:20 Vision NVT 12842

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Amy Heckerling Hideously lavatorial sequel to the baby-fun original. (MFB No. 686)

Misery

First Independent VA 20138

USA 1990

Certificate 18 Director Rob Reiner ★ Terrific adaptation of Stephen King's finest novel. A writer of romantic pulp-fiction is imprisoned by a fan and forced to feed her addiction. James Caan is excellent, but Kathy Bates steals the show. (S&S May 1991)

Mister Johnson

Warner 35234

USA 1990

Certificate PG Director Bruce Beresford ★ Beresford's intelligent reworking of Joyce Cary's novel was sadly overlooked in the cinema. Grandiose themes are blended with stifling domestic tension. (S&S June 1991)

Over Her Dead Body

First Independent VVA 20137

USA 1989

Certificate 15 Director Maurice Phillips A sturdy cast fails to salvage this facile black comedy. From the writing team that brought you *Car Trouble*. (S&S May 1991)

Quick Change

Warner 12004

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Directors Howard Franklin, Bill Murray ★ Oddball comedy about disillusioned New Yorkers robbing a bank to fund their escape from city life. Bill Murray is a straight-faced delight, and the script is razor-sharp. (S&S May 1991)

Quigley Down Under

Warner 52174

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Simon Wincer Tom Selleck stars as a fast-gun unwittingly hired to shoot Aborigines in Western Australia. More villainy from Alan Rickman. (MFB No. 687)

The Road Home

20:20 Vision NVT 12838

USA 1989

Certificate 15 Director Hugh Hudson Ex Beastie-boy Adam Horovitz stars in a dopey tale of teen angst and mental problems. (MFB No. 686)

Sleeping with the Enemy

FoxVideo 1871

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Joseph Ruben Julia Roberts escapes her psychotic husband (Patrick Bergin) in this made-to-measure contemporary thriller. Cynical crowd-pleaser. (MFB No. 687)

War Party

RCA/Columbia CVT 11640

USA 1989

Certificate 18 Director Franc Roddam Re-edited against Roddam's wishes, this tale of the tribulations of Native Americans now makes little sense. (MFB No. 687)

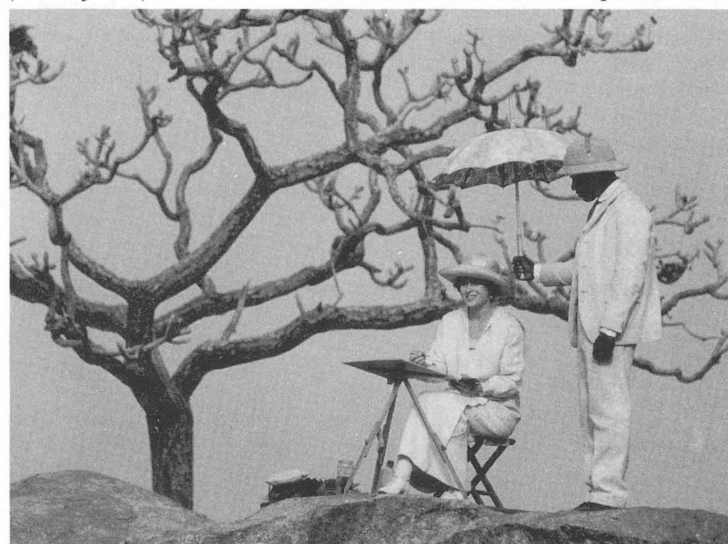
Rental premiere

The Ambulance

EV EVV 1202

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Larry Cohen Producers Moctesuma Esparza, Robert



'Mister Johnson': Large themes, domestic tensions

Katz *Screenplay* Larry Cohen *Lead Actors* Eric Roberts, Red Buttons, James Earl Jones, Megan Gallagher *90 minutes*

★ Darkly comic thriller about an ambulance which steals patients. Cohen's witty script and deft direction are exhilarating.

Blind Judgement

New World HFV 2066
USA 1991

Certificate 15 *Director* George Kaczender *Photography* Laszlo George *Screenplay* Christopher Canaan, from the book *Murder in Little Rock* by Jan Meins *Lead Actors* Peter Coyote, Lesley Anne Warren, Jean Smart, Matt Clark *88 minutes*

Coyote is wisely understated while Warren is breathlessly OTT in this strange-but-true melodrama about a lawyer's involvement with an accused murderer.

The Borrower

Warner 32025
USA 1989

Certificate 15 *Director* John McNaughton *Producers* R.P. Sekon, Steven A. Jones *Screenplay* Mason Nage, Richard Fire *Lead Actors* Rae Dawn Chong, Don Gordon, Antonio Fargas, Tom Towles *87 minutes*
★ McNaughton's second feature bears no resemblance to his debut *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, but preserves a grim satirical tone despite Chong's sabotage attempts. An alien arrives on earth and 'borrows' people's heads when his own explodes.

Boyfriend from Hell

Warner 12003
USA 1990

Certificate 15 *Director* Allan Smithee *Producer* R. Ben Efraim *Screenplay* Grant Morris, Ron House, Alan Sherman *Lead Actors* Cheech Marin, Emma Samms *116 minutes*
A girl attempts to irritate her parents by finding an unsuitable partner. As the Smithee credit suggests, this is not a movie to be proud of.

The Company

Warner 12145
USA 1990

Certificate PG *Director* Harry Winer *Producer* Terry Morse *Screenplay* William Boyles *Lead Actors* Anthony John Denison, Linda Purl, John Rhys Davies *87 minutes*
Double-crossings abound in this thriller about modern-day international spies.

The Crossing

20:20 Vision NVT 13296
Australia 1990

Certificate 15 *Director* George Ogilvie

Producer Sue Seeary *Screenplay* Randal Allan *Photography* Jeff Darling *Lead Actors* Russell Crowe, Robert Mammone, Danielle Spencer *90 minutes*

★ During the course of Anzac Day, two boys fight for the affections of a girl. Ogilvie's sentimental vision is sadly diminished on the small screen, but there are fine performances from the young cast.

Deadly Intentions... Again?

Warner 12205
USA 1991

Certificate 15 *Director* James Steven Sadwith *Producers* Jim Green, Allen Epstein *Screenplay* William Wood *Lead Actors* Harry Hamlin, Joanna Kerns, Conchata Ferrell *92 minutes*
TV movie sequel finds Dr Charles Haynor (jailed for murdering his wife) released on bail. Is he guilty or innocent? Puportedly a true story.

Deathstalker 4: Match of the Titans

Braveworld BRV 10126
USA 1989

Certificate 18 *Director* Howard R. Cohen *Producer* Steven Rabiner *Screenplay* Howard R. Cohen *Photography* Emil Wagenstein *Lead Actors* Rick Hill, Maria Ford, Michelle Moffet, Brett Baxter *75 minutes*
Endless footage of lithe young women wrestling in leather bikinis whilst butch men pontificate. Exploitation doesn't come duller.

Delta Force 3: The Killing Game

Warner 32028
USA 1991

Certificate 18 *Director* Sam Firstenberg *Producers* Christopher Pearce, Boaz Davidson *Screenplay* Andy Deutsch, Greg Latter *Lead Actors* Nick Cassavetes, Mike Norris, Matthew Penn, Eric Douglas *94 minutes*
A fanatical terrorist leader threatens to detonate a nuclear bomb unless the US withdraws from the Arab world. Silly action fantasy with a tactlessly timely theme

Descending Angel

Warner 25016
USA 1990

Certificate 15 *Director* Jeremy Kagan *Producer* Freyda Rothstein *Screenplay* Robert Siegel, Grace Woodard, Alan Sharp *Lead Actors* George C. Scott, Diane Lane, Eric Roberts *94 minutes*
Music Box-type thriller wherein a daughter uncovers her father's Nazi past.

Dinosaurs

Guild 8662
USA 1991

Certificate U *Director* Brett Thompson *Producer* Luigi Cingolani *Screenplay*

Willi Baronet, Lisa Morton *Lead Actors* Omri Katz, Shawn Hoffman, Tiffanie Poston *90 minutes*

Three kids mess with a scientific experiment and are transported into the cartoonish world of a prehistoric TV series. Family fun featuring lots of live-action animatronic creatures.

Fatal Exposure

CIC VHB 2512
USA 1991

Certificate 15 *Director* Alan Metzger *Producer* Paul L. Tucker *Screenplay* Raymond Hartung *Lead Actors* Mare Winningham, Christopher MacDonald, Nick Mancuso *85 minutes*
Solid performance from Winningham in a drama about a woman whose mixed-up holiday snaps contain the key to a murder. Unremarkable, but sturdy.

The Final Sanction

20:20 Vision NVT 13876
USA 1990

Certificate 18 *Director* David A. Prior *Producer* David Marriott *Screenplay* David A. Prior *Photography* Andrew Parke *Lead Actors* Ted Prior, Robert Z'Dar, Renee Cline, David Crawford *87 minutes*
The humungously square-jawed Robert Z'Dar and pretty-boy Ted Prior are chosen as champions by the US and USSR in this daft exploitation movie. Their battle will decide whether mankind is "enslaved by Communism" or "freed by democracy".

Gettysburg

Genesis EXC 0021
USA 1990

Certificate PG *Director* Jack Bender *Producers* Joan Kramer, David Heeley *Screenplay* Dennis Brown *Lead Actors* Lukas Haas, Campbell Scott, Jason Robards *94 minutes*
Rising star Haas leads in a sanitised version of the crucial battle of the American Civil War.

Harbour Beat

CIC VHB 2515
USA 1990

Certificate 15 *Director* David Ellick *Producers* David Ellick, Irene Dobson *Screenplay* Morris Gleitzman *Photography* Ellery Ryan *Lead Actors* Steve Vidler, Gary Day *88 minutes*
Chalk-and-cheese cops (a streetwise Glaswegian and an Australian surfer) team up to fight crime and corruption in Sydney.

I'm Dangerous Tonight

CIC VHA 1481
USA 1990

Certificate 18 *Director* Tobe Hooper *Producers* Bruce Lansbury, Philip John

Taylor *Screenplay* Bruce Lansbury, Philip John Taylor, from a short story by Cornell Woolrich *Lead Actors* Madchen Amick, Corey Parker, Daisy Hall, Anthony Perkins *88 minutes*
★ Hooper's best work since *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, this sprightly thriller casts a diverting spell. A dress made from an Aztec funeral robe exerts a fiendish force.

In the Cold of the Night

CIC VHB 2516
USA 1990

Certificate 18 *Director/Producer/Screenplay* Nico Mastorakis *Lead Actors* Adrianne Sachs, Brian Thomson, Jeff Lester, Tippi Hedren, David Soul *108 minutes*
Yet another glossy 'erotic thriller' about a photographer whose world is invaded by murder. Designer sex, sweaty angst, and an old-hat story.

Jailbirds

Genesis EXC 0021
USA 1990

Certificate PG *Director* Burt Brinckerhoff *Producer* James L. Conway *Screenplay* Marcia Midkiff, Craig Heller, Guy Shulman *Lead Actors* Dyan Cannon, Phylicia Rashad *96 minutes*
Nice performances in this cheap and cheerful TV movie about two mismatched women (a city slicker and a country bumpkin) escaping from a corrupt police force.

Lily Was Here

20:20 Vision NVT 12552
Netherlands, 1989

Certificate 18 *Director* Ben Verbong *Producers* Chris Brouwer, Haig Balian *Screenplay* Ben Verbong, Sytze Van Der Laan *Photography* Lex Wertwijn *Lead Actors* Marion Von Thijn, Coen Van Vrijberghe de Coningh, Adrian Brine *105 minutes*
Gritty tale of a pregnant girl's descent to the mean streets following the murder of her baby's father. Pop soundtrack courtesy of Dave Stewart.

Pink Cadillac

Warner PEV 11877
USA 1991

Certificate 15 *Director* Buddy Van Horn *Producer* David Valdes *Screenplay* John Eskow *Lead Actors* Clint Eastwood, Bernadette Peters, Timmy Cargart *116 minutes*
★ A return to form for Eastwood who stars as a bounty hunter enraptured by his prey. Good dialogue, slick direction, solid story.

Rainbow Drive

20:20 Vision NVT 13264
USA 1990

Certificate 18 *Director* Bobby Roth

Producer John Veitch Screenplay Bill Phillips, Bennet Cohen Lead Actors Peter Weller, Sela Ward, Bruce Weitz 91 minutes

Contrived thriller wherein Weller's unauthorised investigation of a murder leads to a web of police corruption. Weller's sinewy, haggard face is used to pleasing effect, but the narrative is a mess.

The Return of Superfly

VPD 455

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Sig Shore Producers Sig Shore, Anthony Wisdom Screenplay Anthony Wisdom Photography Anghel Decca Lead Actors Nathan Purdye, Margaret Every 96 minutes

Retired badass Priest is dragged back into the Harlem drug scene by the DEA. Shoot-outs, fast cars, funky music (Curtis Mayfield, Ice-T, etc) and gratuitous nudity are the key ingredients.

This Gun for Hire

CIC VHA 1500

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Lou Antonio Producers Boris Malden, Peter V. Ware Screenplay N.D. Schreiner, from the novel by Graham Greene Lead Actors Robert Wagner, Nancy Everhard, Frederic Lehne, John Harkins 85 minutes

Workaday adaptation which does nothing to enhance Greene's original. Wagner stars as hit-man Raven who kidnaps a dancer after being framed by his employers, only to discover that she is the daughter of the FBI man trailing him.

Time to Kill: In the Line of Duty III

Genesis EXC 0022

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director/Producer Dick Lowry Screenplay Michael Petryni Lead Actors Rod Steiger, Michael Gross, Gary Basaraba 95 minutes More 'true stories' of the crime-fighting activities of the FBI. Steiger stars as the leader of a right-wing terrorist group who kills two agents during an arrest attempt.

Trancers 2

EV EVV

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director/Producer Charles Band Screenplay Jackson Barr Photography Adolfo Bartoli Lead Actors Tim Thomerson, Helen Hunt, Megan Ward, Biff Manard, Jeffrey Combs 85 minutes

★ Although not a patch on the original, this lively sequel offers sassy action, a classy script, and reliable performances. In LA 1991, a renewed Trancer threat shatters the

tranquillity of Jack Deth's improved life style...

True Colors

CIC VHB 2517

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Herbert Ross Producers Herbert Ross, Laurence Mark Screenplay Kevin Wade Lead Actors James Spader, John Cusack, Imogen Stubbs, Mandy Patinkin 90 minutes

★ Excellent performances from Cusack and Spader in an intriguing if overwrought tale of two college friends (one rich, one poor) aspiring to very different goals. Wade's script takes swipes at the get-up-and-go ethic of the 80s and neatly satirises the image-selling of modern politics.

Retail

Andrei Rublev

Artificial Eye ART 011

USSR 1966 Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Director Andrei Tarkovsky ★ Three hours of epic battles, creative struggle, gloomy speculation and soaring dream-images, reinventing the life of a twelfth-century icon painter. Subtitles B/W with colour (MFB Nos. 477, 685)

Beaches

Touchstone D407972

USA 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Garry Marshall Wringing out the tears, Bette Midler struggles with a singing career and a friend (Barbara Hershey) with a fatal disease. (MFB No. 665)

Black Rain

CIC VHR 2400

USA 1989 Price £11.99

Certificate 18 Director Ridley Scott Xenophobic, portentous cop-thriller with Michael Douglas trying to bust a Japanese counterfeiting ring. (MFB No. 672)

Black Rainbow

Palace PVC 2159S

UK 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Mike Hodges A clairvoyant (Rosanna Arquette) foresees a contract murder and the death of some nuclear plant workers. These insights bring her predictable trouble. (MFB No. 677)

Cyrano de Bergerac

Artificial Eye ART 015

France 1990 Price £15.99

Certificate U Director Jean-Paul Rappeneau



'Fanny and Alexander': through a shadowbox...

★ Wonderfully romantic adaptation of Edmond Rostand's play. Subtitles (MFB No. 684)

Dead Poets Society

Touchstone D409472

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Peter Weir An English teacher (Robin Williams) liberates his students in a stuffy New England boys' school with poetry readings and student drama. (MFB No. 668)

Die Hard 2

FoxVideo 1850

USA 1990 Price £10.00

Certificate 15 Director Renny Harlin Bigger, louder and ten-times sillier than *Die Hard*, this sequel makes no attempt to develop the character of hero Bruce Willis. (MFB No. 680)

Don Giovanni

Artificial Eye ART 014

France/Italy/Germany 1979

Price £15.99

Certificate PG Director Joseph Losey Tame, aesthetically pleasing film adaptation of Mozart's opera with Ruggero Raimondi, José Van Dam and Kiri Te Kanawa. Sung in Italian with English subtitles (MFB No. 560)

Every Time We Say Goodbye

First Emotions VA 30175

USA 1986 Price £9.99

Certificate 15 Director Moshe Mizrahi Preposterous *Romeo and Juliet* story set in Jerusalem 1942. Wounded pilot Tom Hanks falls for a Jewish girl and comes up against family tradition. (MFB No. 654)

Fanny and Alexander (Fanny och Alexander)

Artificial Eye ART 013

Sweden/France/Germany 1982

Price £23.99 (2 cassettes)

Certificate 15 Director Ingmar Bergman ★ Bergman's declared last film

portraying family life in Sweden before the Great War is a masterpiece. Running at five hours, it would not fatigue at twice that length. Subtitles (MFB No. 591)

Far North

First Emotions VA 30174

USA 1988 Price £9.99

Certificate 15 Director Sam Shepard Based on Shepard's original screenplay, this deals with a largely female family (Jessica Lange, Tess Harper, Patricia Arquette) as they ride round in circles on a Minnesota farm. (MFB No. 674)

Fools of Fortune

Palace PVC 2170S

UK 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Pat O'Connor Adapted from the novel by William Trevor, this follows the lives of an Irish family with detail more suited to a TV series. (MFB No. 678)

Great Balls of Fire!

4 Front Video 0838543

USA 1989 Price £5.99

Certificate 15 Director Jim McBride Emasculated version of the life of rock 'n' roll star Jerry Lee Lewis (Dennis Quaid). The truth may be stretched but the music is rip-roaring. (MFB No. 671)

High Spirits

Palace PVC 4010A

USA 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Neil Jordan Embarrassing piece of Hollywood-Irish whimsy, featuring faded aristocrat Peter O'Toole and his supposedly haunted castle. (MFB No. 659)

Honey, I Shrunk the Kids

Disney D209092

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Joe Johnston Absent-minded professor Rick

Moranis accidentally shrinks his kids. Undeniably entertaining. (MFB No. 673)

In Bed with Madonna

Video Collection MAD 18
USA 1991 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Alek Keshishian
Teasing but bare-faced piece of self-advertisement that should be taken for what it is – something to match the tours, videos, albums, T-shirts... (S&S August 1991)

Jackknife

First Emotions VA 30173
USA 1988 Price £9.99

Certificate 15 Director David Jones
A minor project for Robert De Niro about the domestic tribulations of two unstable Vietnam vets (De Niro, Ed Harris). (MFB No. 668)

Ladder of Swords

Odyssey ODY 708
UK 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Norman Hull
★ Whimsical tale of an out-of-work circus man (Martin Shaw) with a chequered past, trying to escape his drunken wife and a nosey local policeman. Juliet Stevenson lures him back to the circus. (MFB No. 672)

Leviathan

FoxVideo 2125
USA/Italy 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18
Director George P. Cosmatos
This undersea movie, similar in plot to *Alien*, is well paced with colourful set-pieces and a reliable cast. (MFB No. 676)

The Little Mermaid

Disney D209132
USA 1989 Price £13.99

Certificate U Directors John Musker/Ron Clements
Lovingly animated fairy-tale set around the old story of a mermaid who needs to be kissed by a prince to become human. (MFB No. 681)

Look Who's Talking

RCA/Columbia CV2 21459
USA 1989 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director Amy Heckerling
Bruce Willis voices-over for baby James with irritating complacency. Thank God for selfish father George Segal and beer-drinking surrogate dad John Travolta. (MFB No. 675)

Love Letters

First Emotions VA 30171
USA 1983 Price £9.99

Certificate 18 Director Amy Jones
Inspired by her late mother's love

letters, Jamie Lee Curtis gets involved with a married man (James Keach). Sexploitation scenes fall oddly with the feminist sympathies of the script. (MFB No. 628)

Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child

FoxVideo 2400
USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Stephen Hopkins
Another slash-and-stab sequel with Freddy Krueger after the unborn child of a high-school girl. (MFB No. 677)

Night Sun (Il sole anche di notte)

Artificial Eye ART 010
Italy/France/Germany 1990
Price £15.99

Certificate 15 Directors Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani
★ The Taviani brothers explore eighteenth century Europe. A misanthropic baron (Julian Sands) becomes a hermit. Intense and rewarding. Subtitles (S&S May 1991)

Over the Top

MGM/UA-Cannon PES 54248
USA 1987 Price £10.20

Certificate PG Director Menahem Golan
Tough guys shed tears when truck-driver Sylvester Stallone instructs his estranged son in the meaning of life. (MFB No. 639)

Sea of Love

CIC VHR 1420
USA 1989 Price £11.99

Certificate 18 Director Harold Becker
★ Although lacking the clever plot of near relations like *Jagged Edge*, this lust-and-murder thriller has the luck to star Al Pacino, John Goodman and Ellen Barkin. (MFB No. 674)



Al Pacino, cop on the edge

A Tale of Springtime (Conte de printemps)

Artificial Eye ART 012
France 1990 Price £15.99

Certificate U Director Eric Rohmer
★ Precise and perfectionist Rohmer delivers further variations on familiar themes – young girls, older men and intellectual discussions. Subtitles (MFB No. 677)

Tango & Cash

Warner PES 11951
USA 1989 Price £10.20

Certificate 18
Director Andrei Konchalovsky
Incredible but true, the director of this lamentable cop-comedy is the same man who co-wrote *Andrei Rublev* (see above). With Sylvester Stallone, Kurt Russell. (MFB No. 676)

Three Fugitives

Buena Vista D409502
USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Francis Veber
American remake by the same director of the French film *Les Fugitifs*. The artificial set-up – ex-con Nick Nolte becomes an unwilling accomplice to a bank robber – never comes to life. (MFB No. 667)

Turner & Hooch

Buena Vista D409112
USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Roger Spottiswoode
Tom Hanks as an unlikely special investigator and Hooch as his oversized bulldog. The comedy does have charm though. (MFB No. 672)

Twice in a Lifetime

First Emotions VA 30172
USA 1985 Price £9.99

Certificate 15 Director Bud Yorkin
A middle-aged steelworker causes family concern when he leaves his wife for a local barmaid. The strong cast – Gene Hackman, Ellen Burstyn and Ann-Margret – makes it hard to swallow the portrait of 'ordinary' life. (MFB No. 634)

Two Moon Junction

FoxVideo 2226
USA 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Zalman King
Soft-porn with Richard Tyson and a bleach-blond Sherilyn Fenn, better known for her part in the TV series *Twin Peaks*. (MFB No. 671)

The Unbearable Lightness of Being

FoxVideo 5399
USA 1987 Price £12.99

Certificate 18 Director Philip Kaufman
Sometimes sharp, often pretentious reworking of the Milan Kundera novel. Man-about-Prague Tomas is tamed by waitress Tereza, while they embark on a series of 60s adventures. Subtitles (MFB No. 651)

War of the Roses

FoxVideo 1800
USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Danny De Vito
★ Very funny, brutal black comedy

with a husband (Michael Douglas) and wife (Kathleen Turner) goading each other to mutual destruction. (MFB No. 674)

Weekend at Bernie's

MGM/UA PES 51689
USA 1989 Price £10.20

Certificate 15 Director Ted Kotcheff
Amiable body-under-the-beach-towel farce set on New York's fashionable Long Island. With frenetic comedians Andrew McCarthy and Jonathan Silverman. (MFB No. 674)

Winter People

First Emotions VA 30176
USA 1988 Price £9.99

Certificate 15 Director Ted Kotcheff
Kelly McGillis is wooed from her repressive community by a kind outsider (Kurt Russell). But nothing seems to warm up the cold script. (MFB No. 673)

The Witches

Warner PES 671
USA 1989 Price £10.20

Certificate PG Director Nicolas Roeg
Despite a magnificent performance by Anjelica Huston as the chief witch, Roeg never manages to capture the darkly twisted fiction of Roald Dahl. (MFB No. 676)

Retail premiere

Pumpkinhead

FoxVideo 5163
USA 1987 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Stan Winston
Producers Howard Smith, Richard C. Weinman Screenplay Stan Winston, Mark Patrick Carducci, Garry Gerani Photography Bojan Bazelli Editor Marcus Manton Lead Actors Lance Henriksen, John Diaquino, Kerry Remsen 82 minutes
From the man who designed and dressed the Predator and the Terminator comes a less interesting zombie. Dark woods and small towns are inexpensively terrorised.

The Rescue of Jessica McClure

Odyssey ODY 710
USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Mel Damski
Producers Diana Kerew, John Kador II Screenplay David Eyre Jnr Lead Actors Beau Bridges, Patty Duke, Pat Hingle 91 minutes
Melodrama about a combined effort to save a little girl stuck in the u-bend of a water pipe. We already know the happy outcome.

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at *Sight and Sound*, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

Positive showing

From Anna Ridehalgh

I was surprised by the strength of Raymond Durnat's dislike for 1871 in his review in the August issue of *Sight and Sound*. I saw this film at the Southampton Film Festival and felt that it was an important addition to the British films on offer.

True, it does not analyse closely the mechanics of the Commune (although the trial of Cluseret gave a good idea of the democratic involvement). But the radicalisation of the theatrical characters opened up precisely the theme of spontaneous self-organisation which Ray Durnat finds lacking. On this level, the film used the familiar realistic technique of following a group of characters through an experience. In every other way, the theatre represented and facilitated subversion: it is a place where reality can be turned upside down, the powerful rendered powerless, and the political *status quo* both mirrored and mocked. The restrained treatment of the Prussian invasion (Séverine seen from above scrubbing blood off the cobbles) and Bloody Week (serried ranks of bones in the Catacombs) was immensely moving. Demagogic? Perhaps that is a matter of taste; but soulless it was not.

The Commune has been largely expunged from public memory. Of course there is a place for a detailed examination of its workings, but there is also a place for a film which, like this one, establishes the broad class outlines of the event, recalls its heroism, and raises questions about democracy in other periods and other places.

It is rare to find a film which celebrates both political commitment and (as Raymond Durnat points out) cinepleasure. To me, 1871 seemed to be an important film for the Left, and it would be a great pity if potential viewers were put off by Durnat's negative reaction.

Southampton

Cutting-room dictator

From Peter Cox

In Julian Graffy's excellent report from Moscow in your October issue, there is an account of 1947 cinema censorship by "Stalin's snorts of disapproval" which is simultaneously funny and terrifying.

Twenty years earlier, Stalin was more articulate but just as destructive. In 1927, he walked into the cutting-room of the film *October* and asked Eisenstein:

"Have you got Trotsky in the film?"

"Yes".

"Show me that part".

... After the viewing J. V. Stalin reported to us the appearance of a Trotskyist opposition, which was turning to open warfare against Soviet power, against the Bolsheviks' party and against the dictatorship of the proletariat, and concluded:

"It is impossible now to show a film with Trotsky in it".

This extract is from the memoirs of G. Aleksandrov (published in 1976) and

quoted by Yuri Tsivian in the April 1988 issue of *Daugava*, the journal of the Union of Writers of the then Latvian SSR.

Stalin used the well-known method of all subjectivists and falsifiers great and small before and since; that of accusing others of what they do themselves. A pale and watery reflection of this method is expressed in the letter of Colm Flynn in the same issue of *Sight and Sound*. He baldly states that Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Kuleshov "were wrong" without advancing a shred of analysis or proof. Is this not the same dogmatism of which he accuses others?

He also accuses me of seeking to "bind the hands" of aspiring artists. This is not so. For most of the proverbial twenty years spent in the cutting room, I have been fighting to free my own hands from those "directors" who think the truth of film lies only in the image.

Any home movie buff with the simplest editing equipment is in a position to verify the fact that changing the sequence and juxtaposition of the images completely changes the emotional impact of any piece of film, while the images themselves remain the same. This alone proves that editing is unique and not merely one of an eclectic collection of "elements" as Mr Flynn thinks, however much "creative process" has gone into the production of the images.

Directing attention to the essence, to what is essential, is a condition for freeing the hands of all artists, and is bad news for all who live by dogma and falsification.

Middlesex

Rosy in the garden

From James McKay

In his report on this year's Moscow Film Festival in the October *Sight and Sound*, Aleksandr Timofeevsky referred to the wholesale neglect and incomprehension of Jarman's *The Garden* by the festival juries and the Russian film world in general. In fact, *The Garden* won a special prize as the film the greatest number of spectators considered to be a masterpiece, suggesting that ordinary viewers may have had a different perspective from that of the official festival hierarchy.

London

Russian whispers

From Verina Glaessner

Aleksandr Timofeevsky writing in the October *Sight and Sound* gave an interesting account of the workings of the jury at this year's Moscow Film Festival. However, in the light of the August coup that happened only a matter of weeks after the festival had closed, his perspective now seems rather narrow.

Timofeevsky must have been aware that as an international event this year's festival was generally considered a fiasco (no reflection on the competence of its director Mr Yuri Khodaev). For a start, the Rossiya, the festival's long-time venue, almost derailed the event by demanding payment in hard currency only weeks before the start. Signs of ill-preparedness were everywhere; in the gobbledegook of



Josef Stalin edited film with snorts of disapproval

the printed welcome address (in English) by no less than Sergei Stankevitch (then deputy mayor of Moscow and since 1987 one of the most promising of Russia's democrats) whose English is impeccable; in the two days of poorly attended screenings in the Cinemacentre; in the market where nothing sold – Sovexport apart. The festival was rife with rumour. Indeed, Mr Khodaev spoke fervently of "those second-rate people who wish to destroy the festival" and of film union people who, he said, were "urging members on to the streets". Further than that he would not go. I searched Timofeevsky's piece in vain for elucidation.

One hoped, too, that Julian Graffy's piece in the same issue might have addressed the 'open secret' that for some time before the coup, posts within the film industry once held by democrats were being filled by hard-liners. And that it might have clarified exactly where in all this the Soviet Film-Makers' Union stands. What, for instance, is the position of its head Davlat Khudonazarov, coming as he does from the Soviet Union's most trenchantly hard-line republic? One wonders where his union stands in relation to the newly formed Russian Film-Makers' Union, headed by the ebullient Mr Igor Maslennikov. And what, indeed, are the odds on his scheme (new property laws permitting) to establish a chain of cinemas to distribute films made by the Troitski Most Studio, which he also heads?

Finally, is the future of Russian cinema really to be found in *Taxi Blues*, which could have been shot anywhere from Hong Kong to New York, and whose main interest lies in establishing which western film Pavel Lounguine was instructed to duplicate? In these circumstances it seems unlikely that it can be only the vagaries of international co-production that have kept silent so many brave voices from 1987. Or have I been round the corridors of the Rossiya once too often?

London

Soft machines

Benjamin Woolley

When film directors mention new technology, I reach for my particle beam weapon. They tend to display what might be called an infantile or hysterical response, which typically breaks down into three phases. They begin by sticking it into their mouths and then wave it around wildly to see if it rattles. Having established that it tastes horrible but rattles nicely, they become totally absorbed by it, forgetting all their other toys in their mission to discover its every property. Then they get bored and go back to their old favourite.

Michelangelo Antonioni displayed something very like this behaviour pattern when he directed his experimental video work, *The Oberwald Mystery*, released in 1981. "The electronic system is highly stimulating", he enthused. "When you approach it, it seems like a game. They sit you in front of a control panel full of levers, and by moving them you can add or remove colour". That was the discovery phase. Then came the second, revelatory phase – "You soon realise it is not a game at all, but a new way of making films" – followed by the rejection phase; he never made anything with video again.

Peter Greenaway seems to be different, perhaps because his roots lie in art rather than film school and he feels more at home mixing his media. After two major works combining film and video – *A TV Dante* and *Prospero's Books* – he has not yet shown any signs of rejection. He has also

developed a visual style that confidently exploits the facilities available to him. Though his films remain emphatically cinematic, they needed video and digital technology to be realised.

But Greenaway is not the only director in recent months to find a way of dealing with digital imagery in cinema. James Cameron's *Terminator 2* did, too. Though in many respects an infantile and hysterical film, *Terminator 2* broke new ground. Not since *Star Wars* had a film's special effects so dazzled, come so frighteningly close to bridging the credibility gap between realism and impossibility. But it was also aesthetically interesting, because it used digital imagery in a way that was more than gratuitously flashy.

The centrepiece of the film was the T-1000 Terminator, a machine made of soft metal that could transform itself into any shape it touched. Though by no means new, the idea was executed in a way that captured brilliantly the confusing, ambiguous nature of the computer, itself often described as a 'soft machine' because of its ability to transform itself under the instruction of software.

There are certainly important differences in the influence of technology over Greenaway's and Cameron's respective *œuvres*. Several million dollars is one. Greenaway is a low-budget film-maker, though one who shows every sign of being comfortable with the technology that low budgets can deliver. Cameron, on the other hand, reputedly had more money



The T-1000: the all and nothing of pure simulation

than ever before to realise his conception of the Terminator. At the very least this means that Cameron cannot be the auteur that Greenaway is; no single person lower than vice-president level can afford that much control in Hollywood.

But what Cameron – or whoever it was – achieved using the world's biggest computers and studios was an equally important exploration of the join between 'effects' and photography. David Hockney once admitted to having watched *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* twenty-five times because he was fascinated by the way it brought photography and drawing – the products of 'objective' and artistic depiction – together. In *Terminator 2*, they are still distinguishable, but have become inseparable.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit was perhaps the most sophisticated version of this conjunction to be achieved using conventional film technology. The T-1000 was one stage beyond that: it was pure simulation. It could be anything, and so was nothing – raising an interesting identity conundrum which, sadly, Cameron shirked confronting by allowing the T-1000 to default to the shape of the policeman it killed in the opening minutes.

To admire Cameron's work as exploring the frontiers of art is probably as inappropriate as admiring Greenaway's for its special effects

To admire Cameron's work as exploring the frontiers of art is probably as inappropriate as admiring Greenaway's for its special effects

Professor Potemkin's competition

The film still for the September competition featured twenty-three masked characters and a dog. The classic in question was *'Gilda'*, Charles Vidor's nightclub fantasy of 1946, and the two stars holding court at the carnival were Glenn Ford and Rita Hayworth, in the memorable scene where she whispers "Talk or dance, Johnny – you can't do both at the same time". Most of you got this right, apart from the over-erudite scholars who remembered similar scenes from two other, much inferior Ford-Hayworth vehicles: *'The Loves of Carmen'* (1948) and *'Affair in Trinidad'* (1952).

Our troubles began with the rest of the gaily costumed crowd. This happy band of Columbia Studios extras were as obscure then as they are today. Most of them habitually worked under false names in any case so as to avoid the taxman. We were amazed,



therefore, to receive a letterbox-format postcard from James Chatto of Chelsea, a blackjack casino croupier whose job requires him to memorise the order of up to five packs of cards at once. He confidently supplied names for every one of the two dozen extras and claimed his prize video of

'Miller's Crossing' for the only fully correct entry.

But we are not so easily duped. An alert fact-checker in our bustling copy department noticed that the list supplied was in reality the batting order of the Toronto Blue Jays baseball team. You are under suspicion, Mr Chatto.

Another honourable mention goes to Frank O'Kane of Belfast, who thought he could detect the faceless members of John Major's Cabinet relaxing at the Conservative Party costume ball. Our prize, however, goes to Adrian Pennington of Wiltshire, Bedfordshire, for his mischievous caption "You must be out of practice Johnny – I'd know the Lone Ranger anywhere".

The rules are as usual for this month's contest. Name the film and the actors, supply some original dialogue, and win a cassette copy of Connoisseur's Kurosawa classic, *'Throne of Blood'* (usually £15.99).

Cards or faxes by 15 November, please, to Professor Potemkin, Sight and Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL (Fax: 071 437 2327). Next month will see our grand-slam knock-out-all-comers Christmas competition. Sharpen your wits now.

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Joe Mantegna in David Mamet's

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15

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Cartoon by Alan Parker

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